

THE
LIVING STONES

BY THE AUTHOR
OF
THE CRYING OF THE WIND

"Who but I can unfold the secrets
of the unhewn dolmen?"

Song of Amergin.

TO
MAGHTETH MYGHAL



Old Stone Cross in St. Buryan Churchyard

ITHELL COLQUHUON

910.415

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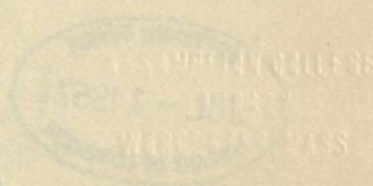
I THE
LIVING STONES

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LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

In addition to the photographs listed below there are 24 line drawings by the author, at the end of each chapter, and as a frontispiece

Old Stone Cross in St. Buryan Churchyard.

Line drawing by the author *frontispiece*

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A BROAD OUTLOOK

The broad outlook of the American people is a subject of great importance. It is a subject which has been discussed in many different ways, and it is one which has been discussed in many different places. It is a subject which has been discussed in many different ways, and it is one which has been discussed in many different places. It is a subject which has been discussed in many different ways, and it is one which has been discussed in many different places.

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ANCIENT SCENT

It was the place of deluge. It was in that place of mountains, jungle and six-months-long torrents where the people, at nodal points of the solar or the lunar year, still sustain their stone-rites by wreathing pillar and circle. My origin was there and there I would return, other than in dreams. I would see that country with eye-lashes untangled by the tendrils of sleep, hear the forgotten but re-echoing sounds, savour again that smell now only remembered from half-open trunks; savour again the taste, the different touch even of the air. I should be among the wild Nagas of the snake-like name, who might once have been at home in Avebury the serpent-town with their ivory and spears, feathers and bangles; whose women have all the mates they choose. But how to get there? O for a strong heart, a blood-stream not predisposed to fever, a stomach immune to enteritis, respiration resistant to damp and dust! To be taken there in a clear breath.

I began a western search for an equivalent. I always maintained that I could remember the captain of the ship who, I believe, used to notice my precocity. He brought me away from home and I have never returned. I used to describe him as wearing a casque-like helmet of black-and-gold, and carrying a sword at his side; but I was told that this was impossible. After all, what could one remember at a year old?

So it had to be by the sea. I believed in the Gulf-Stream, which is supposed to temper the bitterness of this air, bringing palms and fuchsias to western shores. And the sea ought to lie southward: sea to the north puts me off my bearings. I wanted to watch the ships passing at a great distance, seemingly on their way to India, though I know that it does not lie to the west. But before I had learnt any geography I sensed the land locked

Baltic to the east and felt that the Oriental route must have a westward starting down the Channel.

The poignancy of Gaelic melodies called to me, their scale identical with that of Peru: I think of *The Willow* and *From Door to Door* which might have been heard in the Hebrides. Their common ancestry is Atalntean; Atlantis' wisdom in their strains, they bring a message not otherwise to be expressed. How they once stabbed me to the heart; before the age of ten, how vulnerable the heart is to memories of that foundered country, the 'land-under-wave,' perfect symbol of the unconscious. They call me yet, and perhaps more constantly; but now I accept their nostalgia—it is no longer a revelation visiting 'the bottom of the monstrous world,' but an atmosphere. O ages, O western clouds! Sea stretches grey between relic-islands—Fastnet, Arran, Irish-boffin, Tory and those farther north again—where quiet descends through air that is for ever unbreathed-on.

Two huge islands now sunken are the Rockall Bank and, further southward, the Porcupine Bank; the peak of Rockall is all that remains above the water of Hy-Brasil. Sunset behind this keep of the seaboard's last defence displays fiery cirrus torn for 'the prince who would seek immortality.'

Where am I, between east and west? A lost soul indeed. Daunted by the length and cost of the journey to the nearest of Gaeldom, I had to find somewhere more accessible that would pander to my latent thrall. (For an animist is what I am; not even a pantheist, though so I pretend when I feel the need for some veneer of urbanity). I had stayed at Mousehole—whose name derives from the Cornish words *Mo Sul*, 'dear Sun'—once or twice during the war. From thence I had visited Lamorna and was overcome by its leafy water-loud charm.

Then the Isles of Scilly supervened; once, on a brief escape from the scolding bombardment and the seamy side of the black-out curtain, I was riding in the Airport bus from Penzance to St. Just. I could see, far out beyond the landmark of St. Buryan tower, beyond the last of the land and the first of the sea, a pale crescent lying in the horizon's haze. That sandy

ANCIENT SCENT

stretch, white as coral, was the northern strand of St. Martin's isle, just visible from the mainland on a clear day. It seemed to me like a glimpse of the earthly paradise; and I remembered, ages ago, having a dream of arrival in a tiny boat on just such a shore.

When the war was over and I could partially escape from my own entangled life, it was to this region, this 'end of the land' with its occasional sight of the unattained past, that I was drawn. There is some balsamic quality in the air which never fails to bring healing; after years of blitz I felt that here I could find some humble refuge from the claustrophobic fright of cities. I determined that I would never be so trapped again.

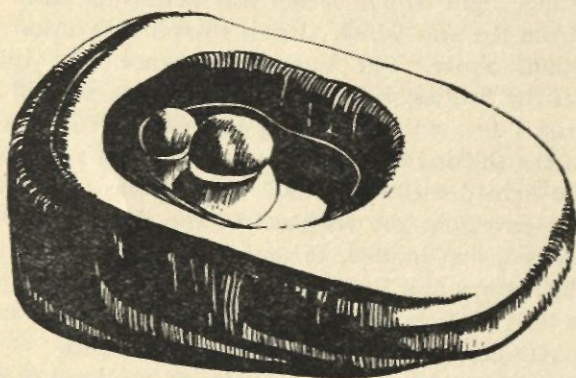
The molecular dance of the particles composing an azure sky are best seen over Penwith's moors—as once the circulation of atoms became visible to me in the nursery-door like dazzling sap that streamed through wood long since dry. Many have remarked on the strange light which bathes this peninsula; they say it is reflected from the seas which almost surround it upon the low-sailing clouds above. The same appearance, but intensified, illuminates the Scillies; but Penwith has shade as well as light. In Lamorna I first saw the falling of dew; and it was at Penberth that the shifting of the landscape-veil first presented itself to my clear-sight disclosing—what? Later I was told that it was in this tiny cove that the remnant of the Atlanteans, escaping from cataclysm, first landed, bringing with them primrose and convolvulus, poppy and furze. Ask one of the firshermen to take you in his boat and you can pick out, if you look back landward, the plummet-sign with which they sealed the cliffs.

You get more sun here than in Wales or Scotland or Ireland: of eighteen parishes in West Cornwall, twelve have feasts or fairs on dates of ancient sun-worship. It is as far south as you can easily get. In summer, the gardens of Penzance flaunt the sweet-smelling pink tassels of dracaenas or 'dragon-trees'; and the leaves of the gunnera, a plant imported from South America, spread sometimes to a span of six feet, hiding in sheltered hollows reddish toothed stems like a ferocious rhubarb, and

THE LIVING STONES

sticky cones of bloom. Violets are cultivated for market out of doors all winter, and anemones for a good part of it. But it is the clumps of bamboo smelling of the damp of eastern fabrics from a trunk just opened which always make me stand still.

Valley of streams and moon-leaves, wet scents and all that cries with the owl's voice, all that flies with a bat's wing, peace! Influences, essences, presences, whatever is here—in my name of a stream in a valley, I salute you; I share this place with you. Stirrings of life, expanding spores, limbo of germination, for all you give me, I offer thanks. O rooted here without time, I bathe in you; genius of the fern-loved gully, do not molest me; and may you remain for ever unmolested.



VOW CAVE

It was May, and my kind friend Elaine was helping me in my search for a country refuge. She had a husband in the Texas Oil Company and hence a beautiful car, in which we scoured the neighbourhood of Penzance. We looked at many places, possible and impossible: there was the cottage with a wall backing on 'the country,' from which in bad weather a stream poured across to the floor to cascade out of the entrance; and at the other extreme, the house and attached studio with a camelia-tree and a conservatory in the garden, whose only disadvantage was its price. Besides getting orders-to-view from house-agents, I not only scanned the advertisements in *The Cornishman* and *The West Briton* each week, and those in *The Western Morning News* almost every day, but also followed up hints gleaned from shop-keepers and other chance acquaintances. I kept a look-out from the windows of the car, and if I saw anything hopeful, we would stop to investigate, whether or not a sign-board outside advertised an agent's name.

It was thus that one evening we pulled into the road-side as we were driving up Lamorna Lane from the Cove. We had nearly regained the main-road when I caught a glimpse, through entwined branches of thorn, elder and sycamore, of a faded green wall. A gate opened above some uneven slabs of granite doing duty for steps which led down into the narrow strip of copseland bordering the lane. Another granite slab serving as a doorstep lay before the rotting entrance; the exterior of the building was of corrugated iron and, except for an extensive skylight in the back slope of the roof, was hardly distinguishable from that of a large garage. At the far end, where a bank sloped sharply to the stream, was a double corner-window, and by clinging to the gutter-pipe alongside this I was able to peep in.

I saw an unpartitioned room with match-board walls which had once been whitewashed; but the distemper was now green and flaking and the green light of an aquarium, refracted from the clustering vegetation outside, filtered through the mould-grown panes of the skylight. Immediately below this was a window in the north wall, and here the wood-work had been rotted by rain driving in. Evidently the skylight leaked, for both the decayed fragments of blind that still clung to it and the damp patches on the floor beneath told the same story. The place was empty but for a few pieces of studio-furniture—an easel, a table, and so on;—it contained nothing in the way of permanent fixtures beyond a few shelves and an old iron stove with a pipe going up towards the roof. Obviously the place had never been used as living-accommodation but simply as an artist's workroom. There were no cooking-facilities, and no gas or electric light, but a decrepit oil-lamp was hanging from one of the cross-beams that supported the roof. It was the kind of lamp I should never attempt to light. There was no tap, much less a sink; no bathroom (of course)—no sign of a lavatory even.

'What a mouldy little place,' exclaimed Elaine, who likes comfort. 'So hemmed-in!' She shivered; she, too, had peered through the end-window.

I took another look in, and as I let myself down again to the nettle-grown pathway and my fingers relaxed their hold on the crumbling sill, I saw the possibilities of the place—it could be transformed. However, there was no indication that it was for sale and I did not know to whom it belonged. We returned to Penzance, and later to London without my having found a place of refuge.

Later that same summer I was drawn back again by the relaxed and other-worldly air of this valley. I spent a few weeks in exploring the neighbourhood, meanwhile keeping my ear to the ground on the subject of my search. I stayed at the guest-house near Trewoofe at the head of Lamorna Valley, kept by Dorothy; and the day before I was returning to London she told

me of a rumour that the hut I had seen in the lane might be for sale. The owner seldom painted, having become increasingly absorbed in practical jobs about the house and garden. When Dorothy made enquiries, she was told it was already sold; but a few weeks later she was approached with the information that the sale had fallen through. Dorothy sent me a card at once and I sprang into the next train from Paddington to Penzance.

I could only spare the week-end, but in that time I viewed the interior of the hut and agreed to buy it. Lamorna had not then been awakened from its war-time slumber, so I had no misgiving above the roadside situation. I saw that though the roof needed attention, the floor was excellent, being constructed of strong planks. The whole building was without foundations, being raised about a foot above the ground on granite piles. The price was reasonable because the owner was unwilling to face the worry and expense of putting it in repair. I could not, however, complete the deal immediately as there had never been a lease in writing for the ground on which the hut stood; a nominal sum had simply been paid each year to the ground-landlord. This informal method of tenure is still occasionally practised in Cornwall; but I did not feel I could buy the hut unless I could be sure of its site: it did not look the kind of building which could be easily removed.

The ground-landlord was Colonel Paynter, whose family had owned Boskenna for many hundred years, and still owned much of the land about Lamorna. Strangely enough, the old Colonel, one of feudalism's last relics, had been the first person I met when I had arrived in Cornwall for a week's holiday during the war, after months of the London blitz. There were no taxis in Penzance station-yard, and as I was standing forlornly beside the suitcase I was unable to carry, not knowing how I was to cover the three or four miles that separated me from Mousehole, a little old gentleman kindly offered me a lift. His bent figure looked to me rather like a beetle, but this may have been because his clothes—a sort of tail-coat and a bowler green with age—reminded me of a beetle similarly attired which I had seen

long ago in an illustration to a child's book. I afterwards discovered that this was the Colonel's habitual costume. But his beady eyes, down-curving nose and dark wrinkled skin added to the illusion. He was almost stone-deaf, as I soon discovered from his random replies; but his small shabby car had deposited me safely at Mousehole.

Now he proved to be an elusive negotiator. He refused to sell me outright the freehold plot of the land, less than a quarter of an acre in extent; I next tried to persuade him to let me have a ninety-nine year ground-tenancy, but this he also refused and I had to be content with a fifty-year lease. However, I obtained the promise of this on the same terms as the previous owner, and these were not excessive. But much correspondence was necessary before even this point was reached, and after six months the lease was still unsigned. The old Colonel seemed to take no further interest in my transaction, but retired to bed and devoted himself to learning Italian. I received an intimation from the owner of the hut, hinting that another purchaser would have to be sought unless I completed the deal without further delay. I again caught the 'Cornish Riviera' Express from Paddington in a hurry; then called at the office of the Penzance lawyer and took the lease myself to Boskenna.

The Colonel received me in his study where a fire was pleasantly burning. I handed him the lease.

'So you want me to sign this?' he queried from the depths of a dressing-gown, looking as though he had never seen such a document before.

'If you will be so kind,' I bawled, indicating where he should do so.

What wonders a word or two of spidery handwriting can perform! Even to-day 'grammar' retains some of the power that made the 'grimoire' magical. The plot once secure, the shell of the hut above it quickly changed hands, and I was the owner of a country retreat, to which I could retire whenever opportunity offered. It was situated in that part of Lamorna village which lies west of the mill leat, and belongs to St. Buryan parish, the

VOW CAVE

eastern side of the valley being in that of Paul. It is, to quote the incantatory style of *Kelly's Directory*, 'in the St. Ives division of the county, hundred of Penwith, petty sessional division and rural district of Penwith West, Penzance county court district, rural deanery of Penwith, arch-deanery of Cornwall and diocese of Truro.' St. Buryan parish continued to be a 'deanery and royal peculiar' till 1864, when the income from the college of Austin Friars, founded by King Athelstan in honour of St. Berriana but long since dissolved, was shared between the rectory and the neighbouring rectories of St. Sennen and St. Levan.

I had become a rate-payer, a voter (I suppose) and the owner of a postal address—but what was the address? The hut had never had a name. I searched a large-scale map of the district to see if there was antiquity nearby, and sure enough, Gothic letters marked something called 'Vow Cave' beside Castallack Carn. The corner-window looked up towards the rock of the Carn, grey above the croft-land and crowning the eastern slope of the valley. Here, difficult to find unless you know where to look, lies hidden the huge capstone with a slight hollow below it which is called the 'Vow Cave.' The name is tautological, as the first word means 'cave' as much as the second being none other than the Cornish *vugha*, 'a cave,' which has many varieties of spelling. I called the hut 'Vow Cave Studio.'

I quickly set about the necessary repair and redecoration. At that time it was difficult to get work of the kind done at all, and it was after many frustrations that I managed to have the rotted woodwork replaced, the panes of the skylight renewed, the gutters mended, the old stove patched up and a fence erected to divide my piece of ground from the lane. At first I thought of getting piped water from the Boskenna reservoirs which supply many of Lamorna's inhabitants, but there was so long a delay in obtaining the requisite pipes that I finally gave up the idea, feeling that I was better off with water from the stream. As a precaution I always boiled this before drinking it, but I would feel inclined to do the same with the piped supply. A typical

conversation between neighbours at the bus-stop is as follows:

'How's your water to-day?'

'Trickling.'

'Mine had worms in it yesterday!'

It is not surprising that those who can afford to do so sink their own wells. At least, the stream never runs dry even in summer, but the 'water-supply' sometimes does so, even in winter. Accordingly, I arranged a few stones where the bank fell toward the stream and filled there a daily bucket.

I also toyed with the idea of installing electricity, but Vow Cave was 'four poles' away from the nearest house and the cost was prohibitive. Since then I have sometimes wondered whether this absence of electric current was not a blessing in disguise: does not a dwelling without it breathe more freely? Some of the tension of modern life is due, I think, to the fact that people surround themselves day and night with the pulsations of electricity in one form or another, and these tend to disturb the subtle body. This is so, however little they are registered by the conscious mind; certain people, at least, can relax better in their absence. So instead I bought an interior coal-bin in which to store fuel for the stove, and as I have never been able to master oil-lamps or heaters, I installed 'Calor' gas for lighting and a small cooker, later adding a gasfire also. I arranged the cooker and the cylinders near the shelves, thus making a kind of kitchen alcove. Later I found that I could cook very well on the flat top of the iron stove, and that food prepared in this way tasted better than that from the gas-cooker.

Then the decor had to be considered; the distemper of the interior was replaced by a white gloss-paint which made the place look much lighter. The floor was stained and the wood-work of the windows and the half-door painted Wedgwood blue inside and out. I had some difficulty in persuading the decorator not to aim for what he called 'Lamorna Blue,' a shade between cobalt and Prussian which had been popular with the earlier artistic settlers. The exterior walls were also made white and the roof toned with red oxide.

In order to satisfy the Rural District officials, I had to deal with the question of sanitation. A chemical lavatory seemed the best solution and I bought the required shed from a neighbour. I heard from the handyman that there was someone down by the Cove who was going away and had some 'Elsan' fittings to sell. I accordingly made my way down the wooded lane till the blue water stretching out to the cliff-castle of Carn Dhu, a miniature Treryn Dinas (of Logan Rock fame) came into view. I knocked at a small square building whose appearance conjured up the term 'block-house.' Actually it was called the 'Powder-Store,' recalling its use at the time the quarries were being blasted. The door was opened by a tall woman to whom I explained my errand. She was very friendly.

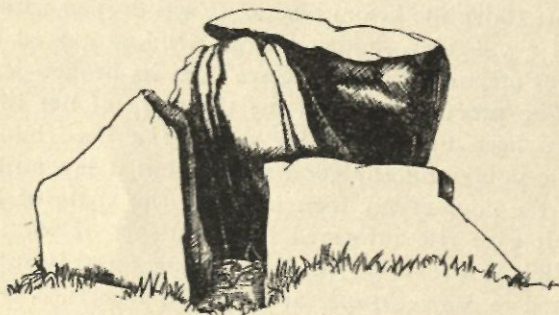
'Come in,' she said, 'I'm just a nun; I was in a convent for over thirty years and I've no idea of the value of anything.'

She ushered me into what she called 'the Green Drawing-Room'; it was in fact the only room of any kind, except a sleeping-loft above the 'usual offices.' It was draped with Chinese tapestry of a sad-green shade; a large window looked down on the pleasant melancholy of the Cove with its broken jetty, since repaired. She proceeded to tell me the story of her life, which had indeed been unusual. *I Leap over the Wall* had not yet reached the public, for the good reason that it lay, still in type-script, on the floor at my feet; nor had the spate of literature to which it gave rise informed those outside of what goes on behind High Convent Walls. My reading on this subject had been limited to *Maria Monk*; accordingly, I listened enthralled. She had just finished the book about her experiences.

Monica Baldwin had once thought that in the 'Powder Store' she had found the 'dream-cottage' she sought; but now she was full of a new plan to live in Ireland. I soon discovered that she never stayed anywhere for long—to compensate, I imagine, for her years of incarceration. In the course of our talk she showed me the 'Elsan' and named a price which I paid without attempting to bargain. She subsequently told me the sums for which she had bought and then sold the 'Powder Store'; it struck me

that for someone ignorant of the world, she was a remarkably good business-woman.

Together with the ventilation-pipe of the 'Elsan,' I carried her manuscript home to Vow Cave, and read it with great admiration and amusement. Her story was most competently presented and a certain success, as I told her. In return she insisted against my warnings on reading my *roman noir*, *Goose of Hermogenes*, and I do not think our friendship, so promisingly begun, ever recovered entirely from her shock, though she has since written me several kind letters. But while her book makes its tens of thousands, the poor *Goose*, in spite of much travel and two transatlantic migrations, is still beating its wings in the void.



PROCESSION OF THE YEAR

I have never spent a whole year at 'Vow Cave,' and am sorry now that I did not do so before Lamorna became, during the summer months, uninhabitable. It would have been enriching to watch, through an entire annual cycle, the procession of blossom appearing in sequence on plant and tree. There is no month of the year in which I have not lived there but at first, before the Cove became crowded, I used to prefer the summer when I could bathe and sunbathe.

The partially-enclosed strip of coppice on which 'Vow Cave' stands is only a 'garden' in the Irish sense—I have never made an attempt to cultivate it. Artists who live in the country frequently succumb to the lure of the land but this is not compatible with keeping one's hands supple for sensitive work. I have often sunbathed naked beside the stream, into which I could occasionally slip to cool myself; though close to the road, the natural tangle of briars and bracken and the slope of the bank made an effective screen. Here when the yellow-flags were in flower on the opposite bank one could lie and watch the dragon-flies making love, emerald-and-black or turquoise-and-black, their gauzy wings so heavily tipped with shadow as to make them seem more like moths. Dragon-flies are called 'the Devil's darning-needles' and are said to sew together the feet of such as lie uncovered, but this never happened to me in my nook beside the stream. It is unlucky to kill them, for they have a connection with snakes which intuition can grasp though it eludes the reason.

Tenants are often as unappreciative as tradition describes them, but summer lettings enable 'Vow Cave' to pay for itself. I now choose other seasons for my own visits. Winter is milder here than its very slightly higher temperature would lead one to suppose, for ground-frost and snow are much less frequent than in the rest of England, and there is less seasonal extreme.

Missel-thrushes are crying of spring from the tops of the elms long before the old year is out; and when the leaves have scarcely fallen a reddish tinge of budding brightens the trees' bare twigs. First of the flowers to appear on leafless branches are the ochre tassel and crimson tuft of the hazel; then the gold and silver, male and female, of willows; the purple-brown clusters of the wych-elm and the large dark-red catkin of the poplar precede the brilliant green of the sycamore chandeliers, the bronze-green of oak-clusters, the black of ash. The blossom of trees exalts one almost more than primrose or daffodil; perhaps it is more obvious here, where leafing is often strangely late, than 'up country.' (Cornish people no longer speak of 'going to England' as they once did).

Along the cliffs scylla and sea-pink thrive; beyond Tregiffian there is a patch where the latter grows in such luxuriant tufts that Annis' children used to call the area 'the cushions.' West Penwith is a country of small fields and stone-hedges, but the hedge-tops in summer are bright with the tiny pink stars of stonecrop, while from their crevices navelwort springs.

To me, navelwort is the badge-flower of the region; besides the stone-hedge, it loves for habitat the crannies of cave or cliff, the ledges where mortar has crumbled from a wall. It is a flower of Whitsun, but subsumes in itself the whole season of bloom. In May it is a greenish-yellow spike a few inches high only with smooth leaves at the base, each sinking to a central depression to give the plant its name. With June it grows taller, every little bell of the spike becoming suffused with a pinkish glow; with July it has reached a foot in height and the whole plant has taken on a tawny hue. By August it has become a rusty poker some eighteen inches long, still clinging like a weather-worn statue to its niche of stone but relinquishing its leaves one by one as they wither at the stem's base. Reluctant to disappear altogether, its stragglers may be found well unto Autumn.

Trees are often stunted by the wind: on a hillside they look like fur brushed all one way; and in patches of wastrel and

shallow valleys grown with scrub there is not much, at a superficial glance, to take the eye. But the country is enchanted, and its appeal lasts all through the year. There is always something new to find in it—hidden well or ancient stone. In late spring, though, the attraction is obvious and could be due only to the flowers that mass themselves on grass-verges or in the lee of a hedge. Under the flowering thorn-bough grow bluebells, stitch-wort and pink campion—the last of these lingering long after the canopy of May has browned and fallen, even to its leaves, for strays growing pallider each day can be found with the softer cane's-bill among the ferns at 'Vow Cave' well into December. After the bluebells come orchises and vetches, magenta and the smaller purple; and among the arable crops, white campion, poppy and wild mustard. The large white convolvulus and honeysuckle twine in hedgerows, and later the blue devil's-bit scabious springs from the turf. Last flower of all is the pale-green head of the ivy-blossom spreading in October its sickly scent for the delectation of wasps, or 'apple-bees' as the Cornish call them.

One plant in particular always attracts me; it bears an umbel of florets which before they open have a pinkish hue; fully in flower, they turn white except for a few in the centre which become crimson. I have never succeeded in identifying it, but it might be called 'Ruby and Diamonds' or 'Blood-drop on Foam' or by some name recalling Alchemy's White and Red tinctures.

Life at 'Vow Cave' is not all flowers; one can be ill, one can be depressed, one can be frightened; friends may prove as changeable as the weather, phantoms become too palpable—yet adversity is not only tolerable but intoxicating. Cornwall never lets one down, whatever it may seem to be doing; Lamorna can do anything to me and I will not only put up with it but enjoy it. Friends in London have suspected a romance to account for its attraction, but the truth is stranger than gossip: I am identified with every leaf and pebble, and any threatened hurt to the wilderness of the valley seems to me a rape.

Few bats now haunt the lane, for they are vanishing with

the beleaguered trees. But to begin with, the roof of 'Vow Cave' was full of them, for they lived in the space between the outer galvanised iron and the match-board lining.

One night, as I was dropping off to sleep, I sensed on my forehead the brushing of a soundless wing. I tried to dismiss this as fancy, pushing away all thought of what else it might be; and again composed myself for rest. But once more came that fleeting membranous touch, this time on my cheek; I clutched at my receding sanity and, quaking, lit a candle. By its unsteady flame I followed a shape skimming about the beams.

Inside, along the main rafter is a double row of ventilation-holes. Mindful of early warnings about bat's claws becoming inextricably entangled with one's hair, I tied my head in a handkerchief and gave chase. I knew that unless I caught it there would be no sleep for me, but after many efforts I managed to envelope it in a towel as it rested for a moment at the edge of the skylight; then I opened the half-door and shook it out into the darkness.

The unexpected is sometimes pleasant; one morning a man appeared with rod and line, saying 'May I fish in your stream?' I gladly agreed and in a few minutes I was presented with two trout which I fried for my breakfast. Here, to exist is enough; one scarcely needs diversion, for the slightest happenings seem full of a crazy zest.

Living in 'Vow Cave' one is almost as intensely conscious of the weather as if it were a tent, for the cracks between the match-boarding allow one to register every thermometric degree, even though there are methods of mitigating extremes. One can keep cold at bay by banking up the old iron stove with fuel kept in a bin beside it; and the tall radiating pipe that reaches almost to the roof augments the heat. A wool cape and Wellingtons make the outings to the 'Elsan' and stream bearable even if the rain lashes down day after day, as it sometimes does. This is not often, however; the weather of Penwith, though less changeable than that of the Scillies which can vary completely from one quarter-hour to the next, seldom stays the same for

long at a stretch. Looking up at the sky-light, I can sometimes judge what it will do by the direction of scudding clouds or torn strands of vapour; by the clear green of an evening sky behind silhouetted thorns, or the banks of pink cloud to the east reflecting colour from a sun already sunken. In daytime, wings of clouds or wings of gulls seem charged with divination against a sky the colour and tone of the window-frames I had painted.

Fog in London terrifies me; laden as it is with the excrement of industry, its unbreathable ochre stultifies my chest and throat. But a sea-fog only tastes of brine and seen through it the shapes of things hold mystery but no terror. A strange variety of haze is that which is sometimes brought by an east-wind, usually harbinger of a knife-blade clarity—a 'black wind,' as they call it, remembering a far-off Celtic wind-lore wherein each quarter had its hue. This anomalous mist, deceptively like a heat-haze does not sink into the valleys but veils the hill-tops and distances, communicating a shiver.

The valley's own weather seems to me that utter stillness when even the dew-drops left strung by the night below each bar of an iron gate cannot fall. The sky takes on a tone of silver, not a twig stirs; and such a day can arrive at any season of the year. It is a fit setting for that state or process known to all Orientals, a reverie that has no purpose but itself. *Kaif* is the Arabic word, but there are equivalents in many languages. *Kaif* has no closer link with religious meditation than has a rosary with the string of amber beads habitually fondled by the Middle Eastern male.

Kaif is sometimes used as a term for a certain stage of intoxication produced by hashish—after the hilarity and heightening of sensation have subsided, there supervenes a timeless musing, a direct experiencing of the moment; a wordless, thoughtless vacuum in which one can dwell on the flickering of a fire, the slant of a tree's shadow, the shape of a cloud. Addicts like Poe and Baudelaire have described it; but in order to know it there is little need to call on pharmacy's aid, since it is also one of the stages of artistic creation. Can it be that an artist is one whose psycho-physical organism is so constituted that it

THE LIVING STONES

secretes of itself enzymes corresponding to those absorbed by the drug-taker? When I have based paintings on hypnogogic images it has been remarked that they show the qualities of the *paradis artificiel*. I have never experimented with the substances which produce the latter; but I do need the leisure and quietude indispensable to the enjoyment of *Kaif*.



I should perhaps find indulgence in common with others difficult, if only that so few in the Occident (to its loss) know the technique of this indulgence at all. The habit is not socially recognised; though sometimes in a bar one finds men just sitting—not talking, not reading, not attending to radio or television, hardly even looking at another. Yet they are bound together in an unexpressed mood, and one feels the atmosphere harden against one as one enters: 'this is the European version of *Kaif* and you are a woman interrupting it,' the silence seems to say.

Why should a woman not enjoy *Kaif* also? Is there something

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in feminine psychology which neither needs nor understands this purposeless timeless reverie? I for one could not forgo its creative trance. Perhaps there is some conspiracy to beguile women into being less self-absorbed, less themselves, than nature intended. The tragedy of many a marriage is that the woman is seduced into becoming more of an extrovert than she would wish; and the price of a woman's self-development is all too often a boycott by the opposite sex. *Kaif* or its surrogates tend to be taboo, since any sign of introversion is, in a woman, particularly suspect; an introverted male may always be a 'genius' and as such allowed to occupy a tolerated if unacclaimed niche. But an introverted female? Society is slow to grant her a place at all, even though the means and the end of her musing are as innocent as tree and cloud.

BIRDS OF THE VALLEY

The plumage of birds at Lamorna always seems well-burnished—the pink, russet, bronze-green and Sèvres-blue of a chaffinch is never so glossy as here. Perhaps this is due directly to the climate of the valley: or perhaps, more indirectly, its inhabitants are inspired to tame the birds with dainties so that they lose some of their fear of humanity and give one an unusual opportunity to observe them.

The valley is a haunt of owls: withdrawn during daylight, they wake up at dusk and begin to chuckle, but it is usually after midnight before their exulting cries reach full pitch. As I lay in bed at 'Vow Cave' I have often listened to them calling and answering one another; sometimes I have heard the scrape of claws as one of them perched on the peak of the roof during their antiphonal exchange. They seem to prefer a still moon-lit night for their consecration to Hecate's secrets; her influences have remained here from ancient times, for moon-work hangs long among trees—in more open country, gales tend to disperse its skeins, and extended areas of sunlight, unbroken by any leafy height, to dissipate its vaporous drops.

There is a group of hollowing elms at Lamorna Gate beside the green marked off with lumps of granite near Miss Westrupp's garage. One of these trees is distinguished by enormous fungi which periodically push out from the trunk in a mottled shelf-like structure. Another of them has a hole near the top where it has been pollarded; and this year, one evening in early May, I saw a tawny-owl glide towards it and slip inside. A ravenous clamour rose from the interior: young ones must have been fighting for the morsel—mouse, shrew or vole—brought in by the old bird.

About two weeks later, on nearing the same spot at dusk I heard a loud squeaking; I looked about for the cause and saw high up in a sycamore of the woodland a young owl. He

seemed just to have left the nest and hopped uncertainly from branch to branch, turning his head this way and that. He was answered by a more piercing squeak that seemed to come out of the ground further on, just beyond the green. I crept forward cautiously and found, crouched deep in a rank growth of wild rhubarb whose flower-sprays were still enclosed in their wine-veined sheaths, another owl.

He did not look frightened, but was unwilling or unable to move—nor indeed to do anything but call loudly for help. I was afraid to pick him up because of his powerful beak and claws, so I called Dorothy to have a look at him. She set him on a tree-trunk and I put some pieces of bread beside him, having nothing nearer to his natural diet.

Next morning some of the bread had vanished and the young owl was still there. He was now quiet, turning his head from side to side, his eyes filmed with a milky blue. He was covered with a downy pile at least an inch thick, pearl-grey delicately barred with russet; his expression was so like a cat's that I stroked his head. There was no sign of his brother in the tree who was better able to fend for himself than this waif, seemingly abandoned by the parent birds.

Soon afterwards Miss Westrupp passed 'Vow Cave,' calling out to tell me that she had found the owl and put him in her garden, as she feared that harm might come to him on the roadside. She was on her way to ask the advice of John Tunnard who has made a bird-sanctuary on his property a little way down the lane. Soon they both came back and I returned with them to Miss Westrupp's, showing them where I had seen the birds the night before. I told them how I had heard a shot in the evening, which might have meant the death of one or both of the parents.

With very few exceptions wild birds are protected, particularly in the breeding season; but this seems to make little difference to those who think they do 'harm.' Birds of prey and the crow-family are chiefly singled out for slaughter; a week or two previously, at Ruan High Lanes in the Roseland area. I had

found a corpse hanging by the claws from a bush—victim, no doubt, of some self-appointed game-keeper. The body was much decomposed and stank if one came to leeward of it, but it was still recognisable as that of a barn-owl.

Miss Westrupp's garden is always full of colour and to-day the columbines on her rockery were looking their best. Below the lawn a grassy path led one imperceptibly into a wild garden where, at this season, bluebells contrasted with the shocking-pink of campion—never so bright as in Cornwall—growing with them in the long grass. Further down the southern slope, the wild-garden in its turn gave way to woodland; small birds followed one's steps, well knowing that Miss Westrupp always kept a pocketful of crushed nuts. A chaffinch perched on her hand and ate a few grains; but she pretended to scold an especially bold robin who this year built a nest in a bank near the Lamorna Gate post-box. He became so exigent in his demands that he flew at her as she was going to post a letter and gave her a black eye.

One of the postmen who collect from this box also feeds the birds from his hand, and this robin has now become so fearless that he will accost anyone who pauses a moment at the corner. Further up the lane at Trewoofe I was startled to have a chaffinch fly at me; not realising that he expected to be fed, I took it to be some sort of omen.

Miss Westrupp told us how the small birds almost invade her house; a great-tit comes into her bedroom every morning and hops about the pillow. She stretched some butter-muslin across the open window as a hint to him to keep out, but undeterred, he pecked a hole through it and entered as usual. She complains of the birds' effrontery, but still encourages them, like a too-indulgent parent with a family of naughty children.

Meanwhile the young owl sat still and mute; he was about six weeks old, we judged, but seemed quite helpless. It is not uncommon for young birds to be retarded in this way; I have watched fledgeling sparrows clamour to be fed long after their siblings could manage without parental help, and I knew a

magpie so backward that it insisted, with pitiful squawks, on being tended for weeks after the family had left the nest. I suppose that some of these parent-fixated youngsters eventually develop; others perhaps are mentally deficient and soon fall victim to one of the hazards of wild life.

John Tunnard told us that he had reared young owls before, feeding them on raw meat; and thinking that this one would have a better chance of survival in this way than if left to its own devices, he decided to take it home to his sanctuary. But later it was discovered to be blind, and did not survive long.

The shot I had heard may have been aimed, not at an owl but at rooks, for there are several rookeries in Lamorna's swaying elms—one at Trewoofe turning, another at Trewoofe Barton itself, one in the woods below Miss Westrupp's garden, others near the old mill and the shop. From the end of April when the first squabs are reared the shooting begins, continuing intermittently for about two months. There is a superstition that unless some birds are shot each year they will desert the rookery; but this sounds like the rationalisation of a taste for "rooky-pie." In autumn rooks ritually destroy their nests, one each morning; but stay among their accustomed trees, where they rebuild in early spring.

Lately a tame pigeon from Trewoofe took to coming into Dorothy's house where he would spend hours admiring himself in the bedroom mirrors. He made such a mess on the dressing-tables that she had to cover the mirrors with a cloth to balk his narcissistic tendencies. Mrs. Trewern advised her to let everything dry and then scrape it, 'It's mostly lime,' as she said. The bird became more normal when he found a mate among the wild pigeons and took to the woods.

This was not the first time that Dorothy had dealt with the aberrations of domestic fowl. Sometime before, she saw her rooster chasing a half-grown cockerel, so she rushed out and caught him. He pecked her severely as she carried him up to Trewoofe, where he spent the night under an inverted milk-churn as a punishment. She refused to have him back; but the

Trewerns were accustomed to delinquents: they had a cockerel so fierce that he would fly at one's head, entangling his claws in one's hair. Once, when plucking a gander, they found it to be full of eggs; they called it a 'galliwo,' a word meaning a freak but usually applied to hermaphrodite or sexually imperfect livestock.

The large skylight above one of the windows at 'Vow Cave' and the corner-windows on the other side make the hut into a kind of 'hide' for observing the bird-life of the surrounding copse. Sometimes one can catch sight of the salmon-pink and 'pied beauty' of bullfinches as they flit through thorny thicket or dense willows; they have shy manners in spite of their striking dress, and utter a sweet but muted song, unlike the bold descending scale of a chaffinch in May, or a greenfinch's cadence that sounds like a chain of burnished brass, the colour of its own wing-bars, dragged across pebbles.

When I first came there a heron used to fish in the stream and if startled would sail on wide slate-blue wings over the Long Meadow. But the heron, emblem of solitude, must be undisturbed, and lately the roar of motor-cycles up and down the lane has driven him away. A pair of buzzards too, who a few years back nested in a strip of coppice across a meadow the other side of the road, have lately bred elsewhere, though they still float above the valley hunting or, as I sometimes think, dancing in the depths of air. The sound of their remote scream seldom fails to bring me to the window; their spiral flight seems to give colour to an ancient theory of divination. But if some birds go, others come, for this year I have heard for the first time a different sound—the purring note of turtle-doves, so they must be breeding in the neighbourhood in spite of its broken peace. Magpies still rear a brood or two each spring in the same ivy-grown tree by the stream; one of the pair spends so much time foraging in the Long Meadow beyond my window while its mate is sitting, that it is scarcely possible to say 'Good morning, Mr. Magpie' each time I catch sight of him to avert the ill-luck of seeing a single bird.

BIRDS OF THE VALLEY

The first swallows arrive at the end of March and by April, when house-martins appear, have started to patch their old nests on the beams of many an outhouse. Swifts are the last of the three to come, seldom putting in an appearance before May, and the first to go—some August day one looks up at the sky and finds it empty of their arrowy dartings: summer has slipped away. Shakespeare's "temple-haunting martlet" waits till the next month, even continuing to mould a clay nest clinging under eaves till then; and swallows linger till the end of October or even longer, collecting in parties on telegraph-wires for the start of their long voyage. When this happens, winter has come; one braces oneself against unbreathable cold.

I have never stayed at any season in 'Vow Cave' without seeing, at least once, a family of long-tailed tits that comes flitting down the valley usually in the middle of the morning with fragile calls of "zee-zit zit!" They cannot, I suppose, be the same individual birds each time yet they seem so; they are always in a group of about half-a-dozen, lively in their black, white and blush-pink, most delicate of the titmouse tribe. In early summer they must be a pair with their just-fledged offspring, though I never found here their globular nest of grey lichen; later in the season, they are a flock of adult birds, not necessarily related, who hunt together for company. Goldcrests often follow them, their hyaline whistle almost indistinguishable from that of their companions.

Blue-tits too are attractive but each year they present a problem by trying to nest in the chimney of my stove. To prevent this I capped the chimney with a wire cage, but somehow they manage to slip between the mesh, fine though it is. Once or twice, I have opened the place after the winter to find a desiccated heap of blue and yellow feathers—a bird had entered the chimney and come out through the empty stove, only to find itself imprisoned in the hut. If this does not happen they pile, with misplaced industry, a mass of feathers and moss in the pipe, completely blocking the draught and making it impossible to light a fire.

This year was no exception: clouds of smoke filled the hut, but no reassuring plume appeared from the chimney outside. "Operation Sweep" was indicated, so I climbed on the table in order to reach and open a small panel in the elbow-joint of the pipe, hoping against hope that the trouble might be soot. I brought down some, but still the fire would not light; fortunately David and Rosamund appeared at that moment. They had cycled over from Paul on the chance of finding me in, and quickly saw that the only thing to do was to open the other panel on the elbow-pipe outside. I thought this impossible without a ladder for the bank slopes steeply to the stream on that side of the hut; but David is agile and scrambled up to it by means of a tree-trunk held upright by Rosamund against the wall. Meanwhile I ran in and out of the hut, bringing an assortment of instruments to use instead of a sweep's brush, and from these he selected a long wooden pole. He had opened the panel but could see no daylight through the pipe; so he pushed the pole up, bringing down a shower of mossy fragments. He happened to let go of it for a moment when, strange to say, it did not fall but remained suspended in the pipe, defying the law of gravity. At a touch it even sprang up and down!

We were all laughing so much that David almost fell off his precarious perch, which Rosamund and I could hardly hold in position. Debris was showering into our eyes, so I could not see how it was accomplished; and was half-inclined to believe that piskies were at work. However, when David gave a vigorous pull, bringing down the main pad of moss and feathers, he managed to release the pole and we saw that there was a spiral of wire attached to the end which none of us had noticed. In my haste I had handed him the baton of a disused roller-blind.

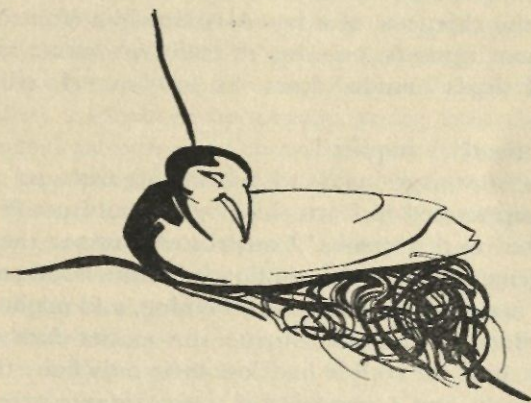
The chimney was now clear, but the wire cage had been knocked off the top during our operations, so David insisted on getting on the roof to replace it. A chair helped him to the top of the 'Elsan' shed, where I have frequently had to climb in order to clear the gutter of autumn leaves; thence he scrambled to the main roof. There was a moment when he could go neither

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up nor down and seemed to be slithering gently downward; I assured him that he would land on the roof of the 'Elsan' which was quite strong, meanwhile knotting together pieces of rope which I slung over the peak of the roof. Rosamund on the ground at the opposite side held one end, while David pulled himself up on the other.

When he was safely down again we examined the nest of the unlucky blue-tits. Among the remains were two or three reddish-white eggs, one still unbroken. These birds sometimes lay as many as a dozen, so things might have been worse for them—at least, they had not begun to sit, nor were the young birds hatched.

Even if the weather is wet and chilly, domestic arrangements reminiscent of *Crisis Cottage*, builders remiss, postal services irregular, tradesmen lackadaisical, help hard to obtain, there is such a vivid quality of life here that one can enjoy what in London would merely exasperate.



LAMORNA SHADES

Before I found 'Vow Cave,' I had spent some time inquiring at the several houses in Lamorna with studios attached as to whether I could rent one of these to work in. In one of the places at which I called the occupier, a matter-of-fact American woman, received me in a friendly way but explained that she and her husband used the studio each evening as a lounge. She most kindly suggested, however, that I should paint in it during the day; it would be quite private, as it was situated on the opposite side of the entrance to the rest of the house.

'That is, if you don't mind the spooks,' she added, rather in the tone a prospective landlady might use for, 'If you don't mind outside sanitation.'

'It depends on their nature,' I replied cautiously.

'O, they're perfectly harmless,' she reassured me, as though defending the character of a pet Alsatian. 'We often hear them walking about upstairs, but they're really no bother at all.'

Ominous thuds sounded from the low-beamed ceiling above our heads.

'Is that them?' I inquired.

'No, that's my sister-in-law who is staying with us.'

I was disappointed to learn this, for I should not in the least have objected to the 'spooks.' I mistrusted however the Box-and-cox arrangement about the studio; it would be a nuisance to clear away my work-materials each evening, and might well lead to awkwardness. I did not pursue the matter further; but I heard later, how the couple had lost their only baby there some time previously, and I wondered if their visitants were as harmless as they believed. Odd tales had gradually clustered about the house, thick as the wistaria that trailed around its windows. Built about fifty years ago, it had since been inhabited by several different families; it had come to be considered an 'unlucky' house—a well-known author who used to live there was among

those who fell victim to its vague ill-wishing, and was drowned at sea off Salcombe in 1930.

Unexplained incidents were said to happen there; the five-barred gate that separated its drive from that of the next house was always found open in the morning, however securely it had been fastened the night before. A revolving book-case in one of the living-rooms would be seen to turn without the touch of human hand; and in one of the bed-rooms a lady looking into her mirror one day was horrified to see, not the expected reflection of herself and her furniture, but a mist forming within the 'many dimensions' of the looking-glass and becoming denser every second. She did not wait for further materialisation, but hurried away. A boy sitting for his portrait to a young painter who had borrowed the studio was overcome by a sudden chill gust, though doors and windows were closed. The present owners, however, have noticed nothing strange, so perhaps the influence has been dissipated.

It is a low-built villa of some charm with a garden sloping down into Trewoofe Bottoms where magnolias, azaleas and other exotics bloom freely in spring and early summer. Here also one can discover the Lamorna *fogou* or 'Foogie-Hole' as it is locally called, a subterranean passage dating from the Iron Age whose original purpose is unknown. Norden says of the word—'a hole or cave, which the Welsh call an *Ogo* and the Cornish a *Googoo*.' (Actually, the Cornish word varies between *ogo*, *hugo*, *gogo*, *fuggoe*, *vugha*, *vow* and *vau*). This particular structure was the centre of a double-ditched fort, but its few remaining traces are now obscured by the shrubs of the garden and the undergrowth of the wood beyond. According to the tale of *Duffy and the Devil*, recorded in Robert Hunt's *Popular Romances of the West of England*, it was a meeting-place for the local witch-coven. *Duffy* is Lamorna's very own version of the Rumpelstilzchen legend, only here the Devil's name is 'Terrytop.' It is believed that the passage once extended to the cellars of Trewoofe Mansion on the foundations of which the present farm stands. It has certainly been blocked by a fall of rocks, and

now stretches only some thirty-five feet. There are two exits at one end, and one can easily crawl through it, carpeted as it is with red pine-needles from the dark trees overhead. It would make a fairly comfortable shelter even to-day, and it may have been more commodious still at the epoch when it concealed a party of Royalists, or of the smugglers who have used it in more recent times.

Underground passages or natural caves are often fabled to be of vast extent. The Piper's Hole in the island of Tresco is said to reach under water as far as St. Mary's, and dogs are said to have made the journey through it at the price of losing their coats. Hares vanish into Lamorna's fogou, never to be seen again. (Unlike rabbits, these creatures do not seem to be afflicted with myxemetosis, for I have seen one several times lately, running before the bus on the road to St. Buryan). On the desolate shore of Penden an Irish lady dressed in white with a rose in her mouth would appear every Christmas morning at the opening of another such fogou, and bring news of Ireland—one of the White Hags of Pagandom, goddesses once but later degraded by Christianity to black-robed withered crones. Perhaps this was the same Irish Lady whom one can see petrified as a rock of the cliffs at Land's End.

Above Lamorna is the hamlet of Boleign or Boleit, which some have translated as the 'place of slaughter,' though St. Buryan's late Vicar, W. B. Crofts in his history of the parish, gives the meaning as 'the house by the stones,' *Bo-lech*. I prefer the more dramatic derivation, since this place is traditionally the battle-ground where Howel of Cornwall made his last stand against Athelstan. The vast menhirs at the hill-top are the opposing leaders petrified. Unquiet shades of the slaughtered Cornish, who could not save their posterity from oppression, may account for some of the valley's mysterious signs; and there were also many barrows in the neighbourhood which through thoughtless farming or treasure-hunting were disturbed or destroyed. Who knows with what protective curses they were constructed? and the effect of these, though not so dramatic as that

promised the riflers of many an Egyptian tomb, may yet perhaps be felt.

When I first came to Lamorna I was surprised at the number of houses in the vicinity with the hint of a haunting about them—there seemed to be hardly one, new or old, without its attendant bogey. Many of these are evanescent or imprecise: one of the studios built by Colonel Paynter for Harold and Laura Knight always had an eerie atmosphere. The sloping field below another studio is reputed to be traversed on occasion at dead of night by a spectre ringing a bell. My next door neighbour across the stream, when sleeping on her verandah one moonlight night saw the figure of a boy, wearing a navy-blue mackintosh and sandals on his bare feet, walk soundlessly across the garden and disappear. For a moment she did not feel there was anything supernatural in the occurrence, taking the figure for her own son; then she remembered that he was away on a visit. Next she wondered why so young a boy was not long since in bed; and it occurred to her that the weather was too cold for children to go around bare-legged. Finally she was struck, not only by his noiseless tread, but by the fact that he cast no shadow.

On thinking over the experience later, she became convinced that she had seen, not a discarnate phantom but a 'doppelganger' or astral double. She connected it with one of the Woodcutters' children who had lived in a tent for some months on the land which later became her holding. This little boy grew fond of the place and was loath to leave it, and may have visited it in his dreams.

What of 'Vow Cave' itself—has it anything that could be called a ghost? People have often asked me if I were not afraid to be there alone. Residues at least of the old tin-steamers, they seem to think, who undoubtedly worked this valley, might wake to amazing life. Perhaps they do; but within the hut, I have never 'seen' anything. By day it has a special quality of calm, its atmosphere is sweet and almost gay; but at dusk a different stillness descends and I grow reluctant to make a sound: an obsessive quiet overshadows the place and will not be disturbed.

A grey-green presence from the boughs outside seeps through its frail ways; each evening the line,

There falls thy shadow, Cynara, the night is thine, comes to my mind and I know that I am no longer mistress in my house, for another life will fill it until dawn.

If it were a poltergeist I think I could deal with it; I would treat it as a neurotic or delinquent patient, persuading it to express itself, formulate its desires and say what was burdening it. I do not know whether this method has been tried with such phenomena; but the tricks whereby poltergeists make a desperate attempt at articulation so often resemble those of a psychotic that it would seem sensible to approach them in the same way. Their destructive practical joking and odd streaks of cunning tally with the symptoms of certain types of mania. They sometimes scribble—drawings or disjointed phrases—or speak a few words in the ‘direct voice’; if they were encouraged to express themselves freely in these media one might—I will not say penetrate to the unconscious, because they seem to be their own unconscious—but discover why they are as they are and perhaps help them to develop.

The distillation at ‘Vow Cave’ is of a very different type—so diffused is it that it is hardly more than a mood, an extension of place and hour. How does one come to terms with such? Not that I want it displaced, but I should like to understand its essence.

There are people who have felt in this valley that nature-spirits were weeping: imprisoned and misused by Druidism in decay—and, as some maintain, by more recent sorceries—these spirits can only mourn. Their life is not that of humanity, they are a separate race; ‘the cream-bowl duly set’ would not console them as it might the ‘drudging goblin’ or ‘lubber fiend’ who is nearer to human consciousness. What can one do but offer them peaceful co-existence? unless one have the Prospero-skill to grant them release.

Others think that the ‘melancholy’ of Lamorna goes further back than can be imagined: some trouble of the rocks before

humanity began may still impinge upon the vitality of trees.

Looking out of my corner-window across the stream to the Long Meadow, I have seen a blue mist rising from a particular thorn-tree. (Respect for thorns, still not extinct in Ireland, is one of the last vestiges of tree-worship; if only it still obtained in Cornwall fewer would be needlessly cut down!) The colour is an impalpable blue like wood-smoke and interlaces itself with the branches, rising sometimes in a corona above them; it appears in broad daylight, often in bright sunshine. I think perhaps it is most obvious in spring and early summer. I have also seen the blueness hanging in the upper branches of the wych-elms at the far end of the same meadow; and again at Tintagel, above a thorn. John Müller, whose holding in the Lizard district is worked with the accord of Elemental powers, believes that this meadow was the Atlanteans' dancing-floor; here they trod their measures to the divinity who in Egypt became Hathor—Venus crowned with the crescent moon. When they fled from their doomed continent, he says, they landed not only at Penberth but all along the Cornish coast. But his theories are many, and finally I could not be sure whether he meant that what I see was a manifestation of the Blue Devas which stimulate plant-growth, or some remnant of a Druid spell.

It is not so much that individual buildings are haunted as that the valley itself is bathed in a strange atmosphere. The weirdness spreads up through the Bottoms to Tregadgwith, and up through that more open branch of the valley which runs under Bojewan's Carn—spreads indeed all over West Penwith, thinning out here, coagulating there. One could make a map with patches of colour to mark the praeternatural character of certain localities, but these would intensify rather than vary the general hue. So it is not surprising to find eerie places beyond the confines of Lamorna.

An ancient stone-cross marks the place where an avenue begins to tunnel through the dwarf oaks, their tops bent over by the wind, that shade the hydrangeas on either side to a papery green-blue, till it reaches what has some claim to be called the

first-and-last 'gentleman's residence' in Britain. Here, bells would suddenly start ringing when no one had pressed them, lights would flash on when no one had touched a switch, voices called people by name when no one had spoken. In one particular room clammy fingers would clutch the bedclothes and tug them from the dismayed sleeper: I have heard his own account of the experience from one who had been thus victimised.

Wandering near the farmstead whose name means 'House of trees,' for many oaks grew there in the twelfth century when the first house was built, Miss Fox used to declare that a small hand would be slipped into hers, although no figure was visible. The house which she used to share with her sister leads its own withdrawn life, dense with emanations. Here again its strange quality is due mainly to the site, where the stream trickles down from Brane and spreads in a stagnant pool, and the toothed stems of gunnera lift their huge umbrellas. Overhung with white jessamine and shaded by trees, it hides behind the growth of a garden gone wild, where stones that were once a chapel moulder in the untended grass. These remains concealed a stone-cross which was removed and set up outside the hedge on the verge of the road; but ill-luck is said to follow such removals. Often a child would be heard crying outside, and when the door was opened—no one there.

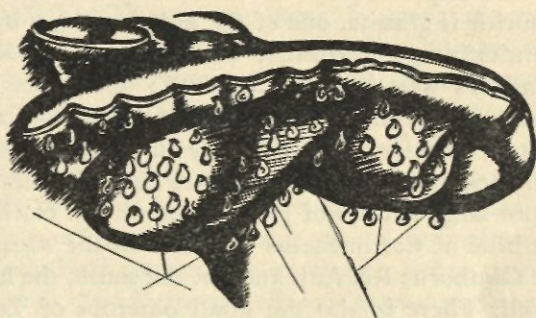
Not far down the road on the opposite side is a farm that was abandoned because of the activities of a malicious poltergeist. A new bungalow built nearby seems to be free of its frantic attempts at avowal. Further afield, the stones called 'the Ring and Thimble' are haunted by the ghost of a man who was cruel to his hounds and, now himself in hound-shape, makes a midnight appearance at the full of the Hunter's Moon.

Even Dorothy, least psychic of people, tells a ghost-story concerning the elm-shaded lane up which she often gropes her way in pitch darkness:

The Lord of the Manor of Trewoofe had gone to the Crusades, leaving his young and pretty wife with two small children. So long was he gone without sending her word that she assumed

his death and prepared to marry another. In the middle of the wedding-festivities her lord returned unannounced and asked where the children were; but no one knew. Neglected by their mother and her servants, they had fallen into the mill-leaf and been drowned; and two little wraiths may still be seen floating above the water.

'But that's *my* ghost-story!' exclaimed Miss Fox on hearing it recounted. 'Those are the children's voices that we hear crying at our door.'



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The life of a region depends ultimately on its geologic substratum, for this sets up a chain-reaction which passes, determining their character, in turn through its streams and wells, its vegetation and the animal-life that feeds on this, and finally through the type of human being attracted to live there. In a profound sense also the structure of its rocks gives rise to the psychic life of the land: granite, serpentine, slate, sandstone, limestone, chalk and the rest have each their special personality dependant on the age in which they were laid down, each being co-existent with a special phase of the earth-spirit's manifestation.

West Penwith is granite, one of the oldest rocks, a byword for hardness, endurance, inflexibility. That is the fundamental fact about Cornwall's western-most 'hundred'; and unless you like granite, you will not find happiness there. But if there is that about a granite boulder hung with grey and golden lichen which 'sends' you, then you will feel at home. East of Penzance there are two more large *massifs* of granite before you reach Bodmin Moor: the hills of Carnmenellis that end in the scarp of Carn Brea above Camborne-Redruth and, on the south, the hinterland of St. Austell. There is also the small outcrops of Tregonning Hill declining coastward to Rinsey Head.

So great a continuity of soil links the Dartmoor Tors and those of Cornwall that one wonders at the immediate difference once you cross the Tamar, whether by road or across Brunel's famous suspension-bridge at Saltash. Both Cornwall and Devon, not to mention part of Somerset, were all comprehended in the territory of the people whom the Romans called Dumnonii. It must be in Cornwall, that almost-island, that Dumnonian factors and influences have finally, after successive pressures—economic, racial, religious, political—been massed together, whereas further 'into England' they have become thinned out.

However this may be, the range of Tors is a defensive chain;

to this day the granite masses that crown the hills of Devon and Cornwall have rather the look of constructions than chance formations of nature. In Cornwall, the 'Cheesewring' near Liskeard is perhaps the most striking of these, though many others, like Row Tor and Brown Willy, are scattered over the Bodmin Moors. Penwith too, can show Trencrom and the moors above the coast from St. Ives to Zennor, not forgetting the sinister Kenijack inland from St. Just. Structures they once were, but all that now remains are a few stumps, the abraded foundations of a power-house where Sarron and Samoths, royal colonists from Atlantis, stored their subtle force. To the sensitive, these truncated towers still emanate the residue of a powerful radiation. A *carrek sans* or 'holy rock' is one that was anciently magnetised; and until a few years ago if not more recently, many of these, whether Tors or not, were the scene of stone-worshipping rites. It may be that granite more than another rock retains for aeons such psychic forces. Only recently Dartmoor's Kes Tor was used as an altar in a sacramental celebration designed to absorb this force and distribute it by Christian means. But Rocks, Wells and Trees were originally the animist's Trinity.

Not only the Tors but also the 'rude stone monuments,' the more widely acknowledged relics of an unimagined age, are repositories still of ancient power, are the living stones. Modern erections may be distinguished landmarks or seamarks, but around them can be sensed no magnetic field: such are Knill's Steeple on the high ground east of St. Ives; or the immense granite cross in the centre of Carn Brea—very different from the Tors at either end—which commemorates Francis Basset of Tehidy, or that other set up by some Adventist sect on Dodman Point; or the attenuated pyramid, memorial of two wars, that crowns Tregonning Hill. Striking as they may be in form, size and position, they have no informing vitality; being uncharged, they exhale a mausoleum's chill.

How different in quality are the stones surrounding an ancient well! Either they have absorbed the virtue of the spring they guard, or have themselves been 'holy rocks' before their incor-

poration with the shrine—often itself a perpetuation of the earliest lore though nominally ‘converted.’ Old stone crosses, too, are full of psychic life; some are older than Christianity, examples of the masculine cross: others, like the ‘Wendron God’ to whom hats were but lately doffed, were sanctified menhirs before they were carved with the cross-form. Some indeed are Christian; but had the Celtic Church not some praeter-natural contact that later orthodoxies have lost or been denied?

A rare exception to the deadness of later monoliths can sometimes be detected in a milestone: I recall a double one as particularly full of character. Each face is a small granite slab surmounted by a cap-stone, and is carved with a pointing hand to indicate direction; one marks the way to Land’s End, in the neighbourhood of Crows-an-Wra, the other to St. Just. One which stands on the main road between Breage and Helston is a plainer affair; but all are painted with black lettering, and the St. Just one has the word ‘Miles’ decorated with a design of caligraphic lines.

If the whole of Cornwall possesses a definite peninsular character, this is increased as one reaches the near-island of West Penwith. Even to-day it is almost completely divided from the rest of Cornwall by water, if you take into account the streams that link the Hayle estuary with the marshes west of Marazion. Here a low-lying valley runs almost from the north coast to the south; but further east the watershed between the two coastal areas is actually narrower, being no more than the space dividing the source of the brook at Pengersick and that of the stream flowing past St. Germoe’s church to join, ultimately, the Hayle River.

In a prophecy by Merlin’s predecessor Maelgwyn, whose name has been Latinised as Melchinus, occur the words ‘The Isle of Avalon, hungry for the burial of natives, once adorned above all others in the world by oracular circles of prophecy—’ The actual phrase used is *sperulis vaticinantibus*; could *sperulae vaticinantes* refer to stone-circles? It is true that *sperula* is generally used to mean a solid globe, but the Latin of Melchinus

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is very corrupt. Folklore has forgotten him; but Merlin's name still lingers round the Cornish coasts. Merlin's Rock is washed by the sea outside the cave at Mousehole; and though I have not heard the name of the enchanter associated with the cave itself, old fishermen of the little port are still loath to enter it.

Since no one knows the purpose of these circles, beyond the fact that they were temples, may they not have been used for some kind of divination? There are at least half a dozen of them in West Penwith, of which several were composed, like those at Boskednan, Boscawen-ûn and Nûn-Cerag, of nineteen stones. The same number of socket-holes has been traced on the south-east of Stonehenge; once every nineteen years the sun-god was due to appear to his worshippers, when an approximation of lunar and solar time occurred; and nineteen years was the length of the Sacred King's reign. The circles were perhaps oriented to the quarters of the May-November year by the rising of sun or star upon their attendant monoliths.

The island of Avalon or Ictis has never been certainly identified, though besides Glastonbury, Looe Island, St. Michael's Mount and one or more of the Scillies have been suggested. It would seem to have been a stretch of country more extensive than Looe Island or the Mount, since the tinnerns brought their goods to it from the Mendips in Somerset for shipment abroad. There would be little point in bringing tin to either of these as they are too near the coast. If my intuition is correct, they are also ruled out because they possess no stone-circles; so is Glastonbury, and the Scillies have but a dubious claim, only one of them, St. Martin, having such a circle.

West Penwith may once have been, owing to changes in the relation of land to water, an even closer approximation to an island than it is to-day. To go further east, that inlet of the River Fal leading to Tregony was a navigable waterway used within living memory by ships of fair size, but is to-day no more than a brook. By the number of pre-historic cemeteries it contains, Penwith might well be called 'hungry for the burial of natives'—though this could also be applied to the Scilly Islands. The

Ictian Sea is the English Channel, and Ictis is equated with Avalon; I was interested to find my identification of these two names with the Penwith peninsula confirmed in H. R. Coulthard's *The Story of an Ancient Parish*. If this region is indeed Ictis-Avalon, the region of the tinnerns and the land of the dead, then Joseph of Arimathea and his disciples, to the number of thirteen, lie buried in its rocky soil. Here also lies the Pagan chieftain Abadaré of Saphat, whose identity Melchinus does not reveal, leaving him merely as a mysterious name.

Some of the circles may have been sepulchral—either marking a single important tomb or, like the 'Merry Maidens' of Nûn Cerag, the centre of a Bronze-Age cemetery. A Pagan temple need not have been primarily a tomb because associated with burials: it may well have had other functions beside the funereal. Tombs are found in or near many churches to-day. Hals tells us that the barrows surrounding this circle were levelled by farmers to manure their land. Only one of them remains, and this is to be found on the brow of the hill between Rocky Lane and the road from Lamorna to Boleigh.

The name of this circle means 'moorland rock' the 'nûn'-syllable occurring in St. Buryan's other circle, sometimes spelt 'Boscawen-nûn'. 'Nûn Cerag' also attaches to the ruined cottage that weathers in a corner of the field; why it remained in a state of dilapidation even at the acutest stage of the housing-shortage I have often wondered. It could well have been repaired and if necessary altered; but does the circle radiate so intense a force as to preclude human habitation at close quarters? I remember noticing a similar house abandoned beside the 'furzy down' which hides the Mên-an-Tol, another focal-point for legend. I crawled from east to west through the ring-like stone set on edge in the centre of this monument as a cure for rheumatism, and was disappointed with the result, not knowing that in order to be effective the rite should be performed in a state of nudity.

On my first visit to the moors above Madron where it stands I wanted to see Lanyon Cromlech, so asked the bus conductor for Lanyon.

'Do you want the Crom?' was the reply, rather as though this antiquity were a public pet. I have been told that no animal, horse or dog, will go near; it is not only human beings who pick up 'vibrations'—for want of a better term—at such places. Cattle however, seem differently sensitive, for I have many times seen the cows of Rosemodres grazing peacefully among the 'Merry Maidens.'

Searching the Boskednan region for another circle called the 'Nine Maidens' as they all are, irrespective of the number of stones composing them, I asked some road-menders where it was.

'Ah, the Ni-Maen,' answered one, and I wondered if these Cornish words had been corrupted into 'nine maidens.'

He went on to tell me that this circle was once used as a market—a folk-memory that must stretch back to Neolithic times—for it lies now away in the centre of moorland, unapproached even by a track. But in former times it may well have been a centre for several kinds of assembly, and the association of fair and religious festival—usually in origin a sun-festival—still obtains.

As far as I know there is only one other stone beside the Mên-an-Tol through which one squeezes as a specific, this being the Tolven Stone at the back of a farm in the Helford River area, sited on a ridgeway which is crossed by an ancient track to Helston. Here the result insured being fertility, I feel certain that the prerequisite of nudity also applies. It is a rock pierced by a round hole through which one can just wriggle, the whole performance being plainly a birth-symbol.

On the same day when I performed this rite, I visited also the Maen Pol, a huge egg-shaped mass raised on end by a low platform in the middle of another farmyard. Once it was partnered by a monolith still taller: if you follow the muddy track uphill through the farm and beyond to a disused quarry, you can still see the place where this phallic giant stood. It used to be a centre of concourse for miles around; even when expedition had replaced pilgrimage and reverence had departed, wonder still remained and a kind of nostalgic affection. But avarice

supervened—also, who knows? perhaps a perverse longing for symbolic castration—and the quarry-face was scooped from under the monolith, which toppled forward over the precipice to be shattered at its base. I looked down with melancholy at the fragments still lying in the stained water of the quarry-tarn; grey heavens were weeping a drizzle as I retraced my steps down the track.

The two great stones were male and female when this place was a centre for that oldest of religions—the cult politely screened under the term ‘fertility rites.’ But it comes from an age before utilitarian motives were required to justify sex, before puritanism had blighted primitive joy. Echoes of this far-off time still haunt the farm itself, where smaller egg-shaped stones, chosen for their whiteness, ornament the head of gate-jambs or the termination of walls.

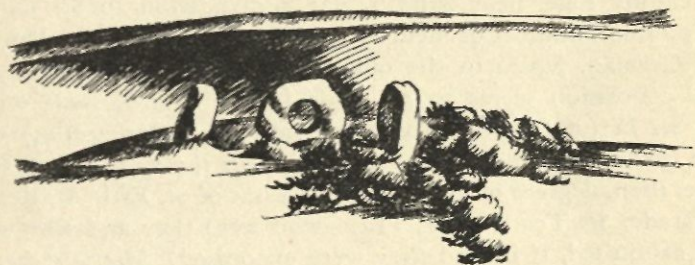
Nearer home one often hears, as people tell one the way about Lamorna district, some such phrase as, ‘You pass the Ring and Thimble.’ At first I took this to be an inn, though none appeared where the map showed it to be, near Chywoone Grove on the way to Newlyn. Even when I knew it for a stone monument, I failed to find it, for antiquities are often coy and will not show themselves to the impatient. But finally I discovered it hiding in the herbage of the road-side—a stone about two feet high, carved in the shape of a thimble, and beside it an up-ended diamond-shaped slab incised with a ring. Mrs. Cock, late of Nancothan, the ‘valley of the Wood Pigeons,’ supplied me with the folktale about it: A lady and gentleman were driving by one day in their carriage when the horse shied and over-turned them. The lady was picked up dead and a ring and a thimble fell from her purse; these were carved in stone and set up on the spot as a memorial to her. But it was Lady Tillard who filled in a soberer historical background, telling me that an old mansion once occupied the site of the ‘Ring and Thimble’ which may have formed part of its stonework. A man’s ring of the seventeenth century was actually found there. The farm opposite, Trewarveneth, used to belong to the Godolphin family whose

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helmets hang in the church at Breage. A small silver ring and thimble are two of the traditional objects hidden in Christmas pudding or Twelfth Night cake, their divinatory significance being marriage and spinsterhood.

That cattle may scratch themselves, it is a Cornish habit to place an upright stone in the middle of a field. Visitors are sometimes teased when they ask about one, thinking it a menhir—they are told that when it hears church bells ring, it gets up and walks round the field.

Stones that whisper, stones that dance, that play on pipe or fiddle, that tremble at cock-crow, that eat and drink, stones that march as an army—these unhewn slabs of granite hold the secret of the country's inner life.



IN SEARCH OF THE SAINTS

Each time I cross, on my way to Lamorna, the Tamar by the bridge, signed conspicuously 'I. D. Brunel,' a change of atmosphere is perceptible to me even from the train. The hoar lichen on apple branches, more twisted than they would be in Devon, or a glassy paleness of sky gleaming between torn clouds may hint that one has passed a borderline less palpable than that of the river. On the map, places named after saints increase; Cornwall will show many more than any county in England, Wales or Ireland, for there are 'more saints in Cornwall than in heaven,' according to the old saying. This is a sign, though not the only cause of the metamorphosed air.

Each saint is honoured in his parish feast (that is, if the parish church is dedicated to the personage who gives his name to the district, and this is not always the case—for instance, the church of Antony East, near Saltash, has a dedication to St. James). Only a small number of them such as Sennen, Denis, Constantine and German, figure in the official Roman Calendar, though a local concession seems to be made in the case of some others like St. Ia (of St. Ives) and St. Piran (of Perranzabuloe) who have dedications though not appearing in the regular list. (Are there, then, degrees of sanctity?) But what of St. Erth, St. Keyne, St. Grade, St. Teath or St. Prat—who were they and why were they canonised, if indeed they were canonised? After the hagiologists' best efforts we shall have, in speaking of most of these "saints," to echo the lapsing Tractarian James Anthony Froude, who wrote in his biography of St. Neot: "This is all, indeed rather more than all, that is known to men of the blessed St. Neot, but not more than is known to the angels in heaven." In fact, of the majority of these beings exactly nothing is known for certain; so antiquaries have had a free hand in piecing together any scraps of legend they may have managed to collect, and in filling up the gaps from their own fancy. They have

varied in their degree of candour, some admitting their lack of factual basis, others glossing it over.

The late Dr. T. F. G. Dexter, with his charming booklet, *Cornwall: Land of the Gods*, has followed an interesting trail in examining the dates on which parish-feasts and fairs are traditionally held: if one of these falls on or near the date of an ancient sun or moon-festival, he feels safe in linking the supposed saint which it celebrates with a Pagan god or demi-god. From this point of view, each saint is a present-day avatar of some nature-deity or guardian-spirit, and observances connected with him often retain even now a trace of their original intention.

Thus the Anthonys, Anns and Agneses are disguised fire-deities, as are Cleer, Colan, Gluvias and Erc. The Michaels often take over some aspect of the sun, though it is St. Ewe who 'stands in' for Hu Gadarn, the rising sun, whose chariot was 'an atom of glowing heat.' And Cury of the Lizard, where heads of the local genii carved on the lintels of the church door hold pebbles in their mouths, is perhaps the chief shrine of the sun-god, since it has a feast or a fair on each of the four chief dates celebrated as Celtic fire festivals—Samhain, Oimelc Beltane and Lughnasad—when bonfires represented the sun. Keyne is the moon, Teath a protectress of corn, Wennap a horse-fetish and Endellion one of the many gods of the sea; while Grade, Creed and Sancreed are the protean goddess Cerid-wen in different dresses.

It is perhaps significant that many village names drop or have never used the official prefix of 'Saint.' Cury, though officially allied with St. Corentyn, is not called 'St. Cury' nor Cuby 'St. Cuby'; Grade is Grade and Gulval is Gulval *tout court*. St. Buryan is often 'Buryan' in ordinary conversation; may not this be a half-intentional hint of something equivocal in the personage who gave the site in question its name?

But there is another approach to these elusive beings, a first-hand apprehension for which one must go to the places bearing their names and try to pick up intuitively a lead as to their character.

Who, for instance, was St. Uny? Dr. Dexter gives no details, so I have no ready-made correlation with a Pagan original. The Christian account is that Uny came as a missionary from Ireland with St. Ia and others; and the Irish part of the story is likely enough. But I feel from the atmosphere of some of the places that perpetuate her name, that she came as a nymph of wells and springs, whose retired presence only reveals itself now, perhaps, in some special condition of light and air, some mood of weather conjoined with locality.

I am wilfully following my intuition in assuming that the presence is feminine, though the saint is represented as a monk in the churches of St. Uny at Lelant and Redruth. But so little is known of these Celtic saints beyond their name that their sex is often in doubt, and to-day the name of Uny is sometimes given to girls. The feast-day is Candlemass Eve, or Oimelc, one of the divisions of the May-November year which preceded by many centuries the feasts of solstice or equinox.

In West Penwith she would seem to attend on Cerid-wen, for Chapel Uny is to be found near Sancreed. The guide to *The Church and Parish of Sancreed* ignores the possibility of a Pagan substratum—even though the circular form of the churchyard gives a strong indication of this earlier character—and claims a dedication to 'St. Credan.' (Alas, the feast-day of this saint is May 11th while Sancreed celebrates its feast on Whit-Sunday, whatever the date, depending as it does on Easter and the moon). But even the guide admits that there were two if not three, St. Credans and cannot choose between them. It relates, however, a story of one which recalls the Oedipus-legend, telling how the parricide lived as an outcast swineherd—until by his austerities he subsequently achieved sanctity. Sancreed is still famous for pigs—blessed, perhaps, by Cerid-wen her sow-avatar. Fed on acorns, they have long been considered superior to the pigs of Newlyn, whose diet is said to give them a fishy tang.

Approaching the village from Lower Drift, you take a narrow lane on the left some way before reaching the church, and skirt the hilly land that rises ultimately to Caer Bran and Sancreed

Beacon. This lane meanders on and on, the surface growing poorer, the air more lonely, till at Brane there is no more than a track. The furze-grown hillock of Carn Uny, crowned with scattered boulders of granite and further away, the fort Caer Bran, Brennan's Castle, rise to the right. Just off the track, but so well hidden that I had to ask a woman in one of the isolated cottages to show me the entrance, lies a famous underground chamber almost unique in Cornwall. My guide parted the ivy and brambles that covered the entrance, and I crept through an opening, to find myself in a well-constructed stone passage along which, by stooping a little, I could easily walk. This soon joined a longer passage at right-angles to it, which led to a circular corbelled chamber, like the inside of a tower but completely subterranean. A penumbral light slid down the damp walls, filtered by the green tendrils that concealed the open roof from outside and showed up spikes of navelwort growing from the crannies of the stones. This structure is locally called a "cave" and is so marked, in Gothic letters, on the Ordnance Survey map; but whether it was in reality dwelling or store-house, temple or tomb, who knows? The construction of the passage and the corbelled chamber remind one of New Grange on the Boyne, but the feeling that surrounds this place is very different.

Beyond this point, the track becomes a pathway leading up the lower slopes of Bartinney Down and beside it twin wells overflow, water leading to the 'Hill of Fire,' making the path itself marshy. Here, as Hunt tells us, in former days were scrofulous children dipped "against the sun" and dragged widdershins three times round the well-heads. The place enjoyed a reputation for healing; even to-day it is a hill-side of many springs, though St. Uny's chapel has long fallen into decay and can now only be traced by imagination's eye. Hence a sadness hangs over the spot; the genius of the well is unacknowledged and no one for centuries has been willing to take over a rustic ministry as its guardian. Here there is none to keep the water clear of weeds, tend the stonework, direct pilgrims and receive

their offerings as of old. Hunt records that as late as last century there was indeed such a guardian at Gulval Well; but he was quoting Gilbert who in his turn based his account on Hals:

... it is a strong and courageous fountain of water, kept neat and clean by an old woman of the vicinity, to accommodate strangers.

Looking back from the present day, such people as this "old woman of the vicinity" seem to emerge from legendary lore like the figures in Yeats' *Plays for Dancers*.

It is difficult to describe the subdued weirdness that surrounds Brane. The day on which I first came here was grey and chilly; a faint mist which stood over the whale-back of Bartinney Down, just ahead, threatened to descend and cover all; but somehow it held off. One felt that this faintly marked pathway, winding into the west, must soon vanish altogether; the end of the land was imminent, and what lay beyond? It would have been all but impossible to push on further. Here was St. Uny in neglect, St. Uny deserted—not resentful but poignantly forlorn. Her strange powers, unused, seemed to hover about the grey hill, the unchannelled water, the rank leaf. A presence that had once been drawn to participate in human affairs had now almost sunk back into soil, weather and plant, to become one of the "self-born mockers of man's enterprise." I expressed in an ink drawing called *Interior Landscape* something of this semi-human entity who still pervades the place.

But the vanished chapel by the hamlet of Brane is not the saint's only preserve; glancing back from Carbis Bay, you can see the grey tower of Uny Lelant rising from the sandy scoop of the Hayle estuary, just before it stretches out to the three rocks of Godrevy Towans where the lighthouse sits, rocks and lighthouse together looking like some strange barque. Nearer, along the western bank of the estuary, is laid the branch line of the railway that creeps from St. Erth to St. Ives through sandy golf links. The church is a peaceful place approached by a lane off the main road and still breathes the grace of St. Uny though

now almost surrounded by the bungalows and villas of what has become, by way of Carbis Bay, almost a suburb of St. Ives.

Beyond the estuary the village of Gwithian in some lights resembling a Carnac-like group of menhirs pale against the brown-green of downland, stands above the outflow of the Red River, once stained by King Teudar's massacre of the Irish saints. Northward again, the next striking headland is St. Agnes Beacon, though Gooden Heane Point beyond Portreath is discernible between; further again, a rocky islet with the long shape of Trevoze Head for background can be seen, with another point, fainter still, yet further north.

Puffs of steam rise between the coast and Carn Brea, where the main line of the railway serves and is served by the industrial region of Camborne-Redruth. It was not much more than a hundred years ago that these white puffs first became visible; before that the Cornish landscape, still held by the mediaeval dream, lay in sylvan solitude, the air above it unshaken by the whining of planes.

But the vegetation of Carbis Bay itself may have been less colourful then, for the shrubs and flowers which now clothe its precipices were planted by the first residential 'settlers' or have escaped from their gardens—orange-red of montbretia, etiolated green-pink or green-blue of hydrangea, cane and bamboo, fuchsia, budleia's purple spikes beloved of butterflies and even the contrasting conifer.

In the parish church of Redruth St. Uny is shown as a youth in monastic robe holding bell, book and staff, sparse curls on his balding forehead—or is it the Culdee tonsure, inherited from the Druids and long retained in defiance of Rome? The church, a building in the Georgian style, is situated some way outside the town on a tree-grown plateau which is separated by a green dell from the menacing northern bluff of Carn Brea. In this valley St. Uny's well lies hidden and it is here, threatened by the church on the one hand and the mountain on the other—to say nothing of the noisy town beyond—that the shy spirit of springs yet lingers.

If there is a sinister place in Cornwall it is Carn Brea; I have never climbed it, and it would only be with an effort that I could force myself to do so. I know there are others who have found exaltation on its height, and it is with regret that I differ from those whose experience and perception are greater than my own; but I can only say that its dark emanations reach me even when I pass it in a train. Many have fallen to their death in its mine-shafts, disused but unprotected. Somewhere below the north end there used to be a 'bottomless' water, more lake than well, which exhaled a charnel-air. When it was drained, at least three skeletons were found; but whether it has remained dry or has filled again since I do not know. Above it a grim carn frowns, outlined against the sky. Further on stand the ruins of a Norman castle, inhabited until recently, if not so still; though for long, judging from reports in the local press a few years back, in scarcely habitable repair. The fabric was declared by some to be unsafe, but no one seemed to have the funds to restore it; so decay was added to the spectral look of incarceration and madness that hung about it.

From the centre of the hill rises the huge column-cross of the Basset memorial; and in an old print a dolmen also is shown, but this has long since been destroyed, unless it now helps to form that other grisly carn at the southern end.

The church is dominated by the hill; as you push your way along the tangled path through the graveyard, you are all the while conscious of its sombre shape to your right. The tombs are half-hidden by rank undergrowth; as you press on, a wind shakes the trees above you, the jungle grows denser, completely obliterating the graves, a dead rook fallen from the nests above lies rotting on a path grown all but impassible. At the end there is nothing—nothing but a wall and a retracing of steps.

The interior of the church, cold, bare and well-kept, yet harbours a feeling that is neither clean nor holy. A miasma from the graveyard seeps through its walls; I hurried out, almost physically nauseated. Here is St. Uny suffocated by alien powers of several kinds.

More at home is the 'saint' at Merther Uny beyond Gweek, in the area of the Helford River. A road too narrow for heavy traffic takes you down a sharp "nip" into a valley with a stream; then up the other side, equally steep, till you come to a tall-shafted wayside cross. This marks a path over fields which you follow to a lonely farmstead. One end of the house was anciently a chapel, but is now used as a cow shed; liquid dung lies in the runnels of the cobbled yard and dung-soaked straw on the floor of the estwhile shrine. As I peered in, a black hen fluttered and gibbered neurotically, while above these commonplaces of the farmyard mullioned windows bordered with granite let in a sharp light. A handsome dark woman directed us through the farm to a small orchard beyond, much overgrown with nettles, where stood another old stone cross. Less tall than the one in the lane, the roughly circular "head" seemed literally to be a human head, joined to the shaft by a sort of neck, and to stare at one from a face formed from the central boss and four apertures—its features. Below the neck some grooves had been cut in the granite, but whether for mere ornament, or in order to convey some obscure meaning, I could not tell. Of late years a similar 'human'-looking cross, but taller, was dug out at Polyphant; and yet another stands in the churchyard of St. Gonandus, granite in the slatey countryside of Roche. Over all hung St. Uny's weather, grey, still and chill; and her enigmatic spirit presided, favouring old stone crosses in her neighbourhood, here as elsewhere—at Sancreed there are five at least, at Lelant three—one incised with a 'cross-saltire' which some call the 'cross of Atlantis.' Not all of these carry the Christian message: there is one in Sancreed churchyard carved in low relief with the Celtic hallows of Lance and Graal; or it may be—so abraded is the stone by weather—lily and vase, though the meaning is the same. Others are phallic guardians of the Great Mother's shrine, or symbolic of the human body itself as here at Merther, or become a petrified tree of life; or recall a sun-wheel like one in the churchyard wall at Sancreed.

Beyond the orchard a path led down to a wooded valley and

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to the same stream as that which we had passed over near the beginning of the lane. Suddenly the brook was seen to be running in a conduit on the left, with a single cottage full of antique furniture built just above it. To the right was a spring: a circular stone basin received the pellucid water which fell into it from a duct, making a miniature cascade. Three notches at intervals round the rim of the bowl allowed it to flow on while tall yellow primulas, which seemed to be growing wild, stood surrounding it.



The air was warmer here, suffused with a silvery brightness; a serene light pervaded the scene, making the water seem like that in which the Cyprian steeped her herbs for the healing of Aeneas' wound:

IN SEARCH OF THE SAINTS

Hoc fusum labris splendentibus amnem
Inficit, occulte medicans; spargitque salubris
Ambrosias succos, et odoriferam panaceam.

Though dittany of Crete, *origanum dictamnium*, is a plant of the rue family, it is perhaps not too distantly related to the primulas and they, like it, may have purple flowers instead of yellow. Was Uny some such consoling goddess 'even as kind Venus' who, as Urquhart's Rabelais tells us, 'cured her beloved by-blow'?

THE WOODCUTTERS

In the late summer of 1945, a Breton crabber glided into Newlyn harbour and landed two sea-sick passengers, a young man with a beard and a girl of serene beauty. They had embarked at Milford Haven, offering the crew in exchange for their passage certain provisions then unobtainable in belt-tightened France.

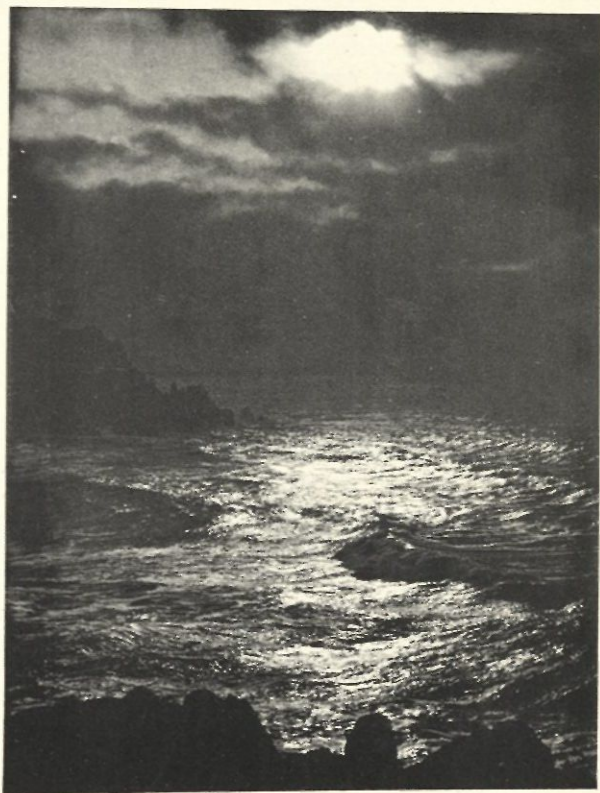
They had had a rough trip in more senses than one; the sea had kept up a heavy swell throughout the voyage, and the crabber's accommodation was filthy. Tilly was given the navigation-chart as the only clean surface on which to rest her head. But the magical calm of their arrival on a silver morning, such as only a Cornish September can produce, made them forget their hardships. The water, level as glass, reflected the fishermen's quarter built round the quays and up the hillside; even the new bungalows and housing-estate above them were invested with glamour by the nacreous mist. There could have been no more delightful introduction to West Penwith—Tilly's first, though Ben knew it already. On landing, the pair hitchhiked to St. Ives where they had arranged to meet a friend, Alec, who had gone on ahead.

The men had been working in forestry, 'lopping and topping,' but had no definite plans for the future; Tilly had a job as art teacher at a girls' school and was soon due back for the autumn term. During a walking tour in Wales she had fallen in with a group of woodcutters and had since felt disinclined to return to the atmosphere of the mistresses' common-room. She had already put off her journey more than once—Carmarthen, Milford Haven, Penzance; but there was still time.

The Breton fishermen asked Tilly and Ben if they would like to cross over to France, but Tilly could not make up her mind to do so, as neither she nor Ben could speak French. They failed to find Alec in St. Ives; so with many backward glances



Above
Near Castallack,
Lamorna.
Photo:
Herbert Stone



Below
Moonlight
at Nanjizal Bay,
Land's End.
Photo:
Herbert Stone

she finally boarded the night train for Bristol. Outdoor life suited her, and she looked splendidly healthy as she flung her knapsack on to the rack, her sculptural legs walnut-brown below their scanty shorts, her unwaved hair bleached by the weather. Just after she left, Alec turned up in Penzance and heard from Ben about their voyage from Wales and the proposed trip to France. Knowing the language, he was keen to go.

At Exeter Tilly woke with a start from an exhausted doze to hear her name called over the station loudspeaker; there was a telephone call for her. She sprang out of her compartment, a fellow traveller hurling her few possessions after her. Alec was on the wire.

'We're going to France,' he said.

'All right, I'll catch the next train back.'

A sense of elation rose within her, now that she had burnt her boats. The Bristol express slid away unregretted as she waited for the one returning to the coast; meanwhile she sent a telegram intimating that the post of art mistress had fallen vacant.

Alec and Ben were waiting for her on Penzance platform, and all three were soon back in Newlyn harbour. Tilly thought that to make certain it did not sail without them, they should not leave the boat; but the delays incidental to seafaring life and the smells on board the crabber proved too irksome to be borne indefinitely, and during several days they made frequent excursions on land. Halfway into town one morning, they all simultaneously knew, through the sixth sense developed by a wandering life, that the crabber fleet was sailing. They tore back along the front, but by the time they regained the jetty their boat was well out to sea. The Frenchmen, foreseeing complications in their native port, had thought better of their offer.

A tangled valley west of Newlyn was calling the three—for certain places need people as much as certain people need places—with one of its insistent yet unheard melodies:

Under the greenwood tree
Who loves to lie with me—

and once over their disappointment at watching the fleet leave without them, they set out for Lamorna by way of Mousehole and the cliff-path. They explored the place for about a week, sleeping out on the cliffs; then, when their money was spent, the men went to work tree-felling, and an artist friend allowed them to sleep in his studio. They continued in this way till early in the New Year, when they 'hitched' back to Wales; and it was not till a year later that they returned to Cornwall, by the same means of transport.

Meantime Ben had been lent a gypsy caravan which he parked on Tregurnow Cliffs; this became the new headquarters of the woodcutters—'the Woodchoppers,' as they soon became known (with a shake of the head). Others of the fraternity soon joined the pioneers, and all sunbathed from the rocks towards Carn Dhu, plunging naked into the deep water of the cove. These huge chasm-cleft blocks of granite are still called 'the Woodcutters' Rocks.' The scene at once delighted and scandalised the neighbouring farmers, who, while evincing shocked disapproval, would sometimes hide in bushes along the clifftops provided with telescope or field-glasses to indulge in the practice of 'pimping,' as this form of *voyeurisme* is locally called.

Lamorna was not the first place where the defiant attitude of the woodcutter-band had given rise to feelings of hostility. Originating as a small group inspired by Alec's reading of Thoreau rather than by Tolstoi, his pacifist ideals had worked like yeast among the students of Birmingham University of whom he was one immediately before the war. A group of them used to meet informally in one of the neighbouring bars; soon it was augmented by others beyond the academic circle who discussed any subject from the philosophy of Jung to soil conservation. At the outbreak of war, the pacificism of each one successively was put to the test.

They made out statements for the Conscientious Objectors' tribunal, with the result that most of them were declared exempt from military service but directed to work under the Forestry

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Commission. First in Devonshire and later in Wales, their stalwart figures, reinforced by the rations due to manual labourers, became the envy of their haggard neighbours. Under the influence of sun, air and exercise, muscles bulged and skin grew tanned; in spite of war-time austerity, colour crept into their clothes, which seemed almost gay compared to those of the uniformed majority. Hair, not obliged to conform to military cut, straggled over ears and neck—mouse-coloured, golden, auburn or brown—and patriarchal beards were allowed to grow, since in the simple life there is little hot water to spare for shaving. The beards of the moving spirits were reddish, as beards tend to be; there were also one or two other 'regulars' and a floating population of several more. All lived rough, sleeping in the open, with only the shelter afforded by their sleeping bags, or a hut or tent at most. Their clothes were reduced to a picturesque minimum and discarded altogether when possible; even their feet grew so hardened that they could often go without shoes.

While the war lasted they were obliged to work in the district to which they were assigned; by the time it was over, they were all so fit and so enamoured of the way of life which they had evolved together that most of them wanted to remain in forestry work. Compelled to adopt it in the first instance by harsh necessity, a genuine bond of brotherhood now linked them; and though they were no longer tied to one locality, they tended to move around in a more or less nomadic band. Their expenses were minimal, their responsibilities almost nil; and the high wages which had enabled them to buy better food than their neighbours during the time of acute shortage now allowed them to work only when they felt inclined. If they laboured hard for a few days, they could do nothing for the next few, but would spend their time roaming about in the countryside, bathing, lying in the sun, reading, writing or wood-carving. They paid little attention to clocks, rising when the dawn woke them; they often forgot the date and the day of the week. Sometimes they would go almost without food for some time; then stride into

the nearest town and fill their knapsacks with provision for an enormous camp-fire feast.

They were visited from time to time by Walt, a friend of Alec's, rather older than the rest who was never a wood-cutter but practised a kind of psychotherapy. He rented a cottage on the slopes of Cader Idris where from time to time he would take a patient for a cure. His methods for treating neurosis were unorthodox—manual labour, mountain-climbing, satisfying if irregular meals and a general loosening of conventional ties. He believed much psychic illness to be due to emulation, an anxious desire 'to keep up with the Joneses,' and tried to show that it was possible, indeed easy, to enjoy life without such preoccupations. It must be admitted that he often succeeded, his patients returning to 'civilisation' much improved. Besides providing him with a useful income, the work satisfied in him a craving, stimulated by his study of works by Gurdjev and Ouspenski, to probe the recesses of the human psyche; he was a veritable 'eater of dreams.' His cottage, Cai-einion, became for a time the rallying-point of the group; Tilly had spent a few days there with Alec and Ben on their return to Wales after their first visit to Cornwall.

By the time they settled permanently in Lamorna, the Woodcutters had well earned a capital letter. A shared belief is perhaps the strongest bond of any, and no less strong for being forged by feeling rather than intellect. Aims were unformulated, there was no organisation; yet the group-consciousness of a protesting sect had been established and had stood some test of time; and this enabled a life of intuition to be lived more or less communally. Now the Venus-influence of the valley began its work; not for nothing is it frequented each Good Friday—'Goody Friday' to the Cornish, a day of feasting—by young couples anxious to offer the goddess her age-old sacrifice. Wherever the Woodcutters had worked hitherto there had been no lack of girls attracted by their physique; but associations thus formed tended to be impermanent, the romantic nymphs finding the life too rough for them after a brief trial. Tilly, however,

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stood the test of endurance, and soon she and Alec were married; Morwenna, who came from Soho for a holiday and stayed on to earn a precarious livelihood by making lampshades, threw in her lot permanently with Ben. Soon the girls' gipsy dresses and jewellery were enlivening the dim lanes. Tilly would wear an ample ochre-coloured skirt and shawl like a *sari* over a black bodice, with a crown of flowers or an owl's feather in her hair. Morwenna leaving her dark tresses uncombed, would swathe herself in puce, maroon and green flounces, adding a jacket of paisley design and the heavy silver ear-rings which afterwards became fashionable. All their washing was done in streams or in the sea, and their glowing skins needed no make-up; they scorned manicurist, hairdresser and corsetière alike. Both wore sandals at most, but usually went barefoot, sometimes walking the seven miles into Penzance and back without shoes, their tanned legs scratched by thorns and stung by nettles. Delightful though their dresses looked in the woodland setting, they were not the most practical attire for country scrambles—their length soaked up the dew, their fullness caught on every briar. I could never bring myself to adopt this mode, much as I admired its colourful effect, preferring jeans and jersey for comfort.

Tilly and Alec moved from their camp on the cliff above Carn-Bargas to Nantewas, a small house nearer the Post Office, half of which was empty. Alec began to repair it, but alas! they had taken possession without leave from the owner, Colonel Paynter who, when he found it difficult to dislodge them, sent his workmen to remove the tiles from the roof. Tilly went to see the old Colonel at Boskenna and successfully pleaded with him for a reprieve, becoming thereafter the accepted mediator between the Woodcutters and the local squire. But they had to return to the caravan finally, and two small daughters were born before Alec managed to lease some copse-land on the eastern side of the valley across the stream from 'Vow Cave,' where he planned to build a house of logs. Meantime, he brought their caravan down from the cliffs and parked it in a glade which he and Tilly cleared of brambles. He also built a small

wooden hut there and these, together with tents as needed, formed the nucleus of their new camp, a centre for their bonfire parties and barbecues. In a sense, life was one long barbecue; but Tilly was already beginning to feel the shackles of family responsibility. She could no longer lead the carefree life of other days herself, though Alec would wander off to muse on the cliffs as before.

Ben and Morwenna had also begun to found a family. Bad weather ushered in the birth of their little boy, during which Morwenna, much to the midwife's horror, had to recline skillfully in order to avoid the wet that dripped through the caravan roof on to the bed. Soon afterwards, Ben built a log-cabin a short distance away in a hollow above Carn Bargas, bringing fuel and other supplies up the steep track to the cliffs in his ramshackle car. This vehicle used to take the whole party to work each morning, wherever their tree-felling site happened to be; for any other transport, they relied on hitch-hiking.

One day there appeared at the Cove a tatterdemalion boy wearing only a pair of grubby slacks and laden with a knapsack which contained all his possessions. The skin of his chest and shoulders was darkened less by sun-tan than by ingrained dirt. This was Duncan, a genuine nomad from Scotland, who was accustomed to living like a bird in highways and hedges. He took advantage of seasonal labour-demands to pick up odd jobs—wandering, working when he must. He never bought clothes but waited for them to be given him; they always were, though not always of the right size. Some trousers several sizes too large promptly fell off, but this did not worry Duncan who always bathed naked, not having any trunks. The fewer your needs, the more mobile you become: those of Duncan were reduced to the barest essentials, and there was a kind of poetry in his complete emancipation from the compulsive ritual of civilised living. If you are willing to exist at a low enough standard there is nothing you cannot do, nowhere you cannot go.

He was soon accepted as one of the Woodcutters but his advent called out an unexpected strain of respectability in some

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of them. Shocked at the results of living at a further extreme of hazard and intuition than they had themselves attempted, they took him in hand, insisting on an occasional wash and hair-comb, and a meal of nourishing food.

Duncan studied Buddhism out of yellow-covered booklets and had some idea of becoming a Bhikku. He moved up and down the valley, never camping anywhere for long; at first he pitched his tiny tent in the scrub of the common at Lamorna Turn; then he inhabited a kind of cave, a damp and draughty crevice of the quarry; later he would join Ben and his family at Tregurnow Cliff for a while or move on to Alec's holding in the woods.

Compared to the life of the Woodcutters in its most primitive phase, mine at 'Vow Cave' was almost *bourgeois* in its comfort and amenity, though I had no tap, no electricity and no lavatory but the 'Elsan' outside. The skylight often leaked but not on the bed, there being space enough to avoid this. But the younger generation of the Woodcutters was becoming insistent on its added practical needs, so that a nomadic life was gradually being exchanged for a settled one. Contraceptives being taboo as 'unnatural,' there was every likelihood of these needs becoming more acute. Here the ideological weakness of the movement grew apparent, there being no recognition that 'freedom' and family life are so difficult to reconcile as to be all but incompatible. Strains and tensions increased, ending in Tilly's departure for Mousehole before the birth of her third child, leaving Alec and Walt with a new recruit, Norma, her little boy and a girl friend. Norma was a different type from the other girls, favouring high heels, narrow skirts and varnished nails, which looked a little incongruous against the background of the muddy camp.

It must have been on my visit to Mousehole during the war, when I had walked by the cliff-path from Mousehole and gazed for the first time into the hollow of Lamorna Cove, that I caught sight of a figure wrapped in a grey cloak gathering narcissi above the crags opposite. It was that of a tall woman moving swiftly through a shower blown in from the sea, as she stooped to pick the pallid blooms here and there. Even in the

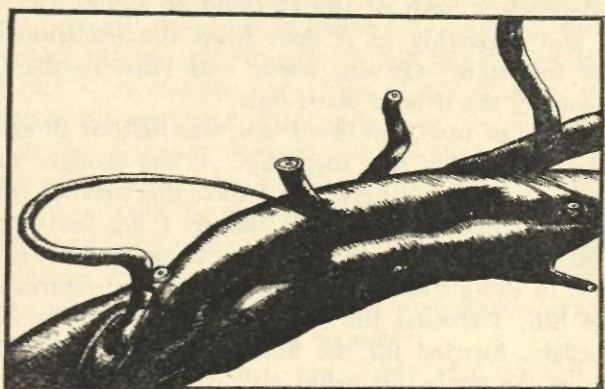
distance, and dimmed by rain, her hair looked reddish: for me she symbolised all that was untamed and solitary in the place, personifying the spirit of Lamorna. When, years later, I first came to know Annis, she was still living in the hardest conditions on Tregiffian Cliffs, westward of Lamorna Point, her cottage exposed to all the Atlantic storms.

After Walt had joined Tilly in Mousehole and Alec decided to sell the land which had supported their encampment, it was Annis who bought it from him; and it was she who had the log-house built for herself and her children which Alec had never managed to put together for his own. He stayed on there in the hut until he went abroad with an expedition organised by 'The Men of the Trees,' and then returned to marry Norma. The close-knit fraternity of the Woodcutters was disintegrating; it was not the first idealistic ship to founder on the rock of domesticity. The originators gravitated back to Wales—Ben and Morwenna with their children to live in a larger caravan under the shadow of Cader Idris, Alec and Norma and her young son to a ruined cottage which they made habitable on another slope of the great mountain, and Walt to take up a sea-going life at the extreme point of Pembrokeshire. Of the rest, Duncan was for sometime working with Alec though he often drifted back to Lamorna for a spell. Another one, having incautiously founded two separate families, shuttled between their respective villages, while a third supplemented the proceeds of his family holding with odd jobs of forestry. Tilly remained in the neighbourhood and, Minerva having finally taken over from Ceres, started a pottery and craft-shop with her new husband, Diccon. Annis was the only one remaining in Lamorna, on the land from which Alec first cleared the undergrowth, and which she named from its situation between two streams.

Among the Woodcutters I sensed most in Morwenna and Alec that faculty of quiet towards which, I imagine, they were all obscurely aiming. When one talked with either of them, one would presently be enveloped in a pellucid aminotic medium, as of twins floating in nature's womb. Entirely at ease, one

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exchanged with them something—not thought, not emotion—through an unused stillness. Words could be spoken if one liked, but could be dispensed with; a silent pause with them was not an embarrassment but a consolation, a refreshment compared to which any sentence of words tended to seem trivial. Very soon after meeting one of them, this unexampled means of communication came into play; it was not necessary to know them well before it was noticeable. I had never found before, nor have I found since, anyone besides these two possessed of quite this faculty; they seemed to have absorbed a sylvan quality of quiet into their very being, and to communicate it without effort to others. Now, no doubt, it is being reinforced by mountain silence.



ASSEMBLY OF THE BARDS

Each year the Bards of Cornwall choose some spot by immemorial tradition made holy or strong—camp, hill-fort or stone-circle — as meeting-place for their Gorsedd or assembly. Lamorna's 'Merry Maidens' as last year, or the ramparts of Castle Dôr or Castle Canyke or—as on the day of its inauguration in 1928—the circle of Boscawen-ûn, have all served as sites in recent years. Earlier in 1928 the first members of the Cornish Gorsedd had been initiated in Wales by the then Archdruid Pedrog; the Gorsedd Byrth Kernow would seem, therefore, to derive its succession historically from that of Wales, and thus can boast a traceable history from about 1790, though some think that this was but a revival of traditions going back a thousand years. Independent both of the Gorsedd of Wales and that of Brittany, and departing as it does from the traditional three degrees of initiation—Ovates, Bards and Druids—the Cornish Gorsedd confers the title of Bard only.

The Gorsedd of 1950, the first I saw, was held at Boscawen-ûn on a September day of sun and wind. A bus brought me from Lamorna to St. Buryan, thereafter I took the curving road that leads to Crows-an-Wra. But well before I reached the cross-roads, I saw over to the right field-gates open that usually stood closed, and in the distance a train of blue-robed figures snaking up a low hill. I crossed the intervening country by climbing several hedges, hurried up the final slope and arrived on the periphery of the circle somewhat out of breath.

Boscawen-ûn, as the name implies, is situated on moorland, and is some little distance away from a road. It was one of the three chief sites for a Gorsedd in ancient times, the other two being Stonehenge and Bryn Gwiddon in Wales. It is singular among the circles of West Cornwall in retaining its central pillar or 'king-stone'—on one such, I suppose, every circle originally centred. Time has left but few; but on Bodmin Moor, there are

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the circle of Fernacre near St. Breward, and the Stripple Stones by Hawk's Tor, though in this last the king-stone has fallen. Here at Boscawen-ûn the pivotal monolith is no longer upright but seemingly driven into the earth at a slant, and points out of the circle to the south-west, an immense granite finger gilded with lichen. I thought of *Moy Slaght*, 'the Plain of Adoration in county Cavan where there were twelve pillars of stone and one of gold.' On the day of the assembly a kind of rustic dais had been banked up with turf and brushwood beside the menhir, and became the focal point for the spectators crowded upon the rampart which enclosed the circle of upright stones with a concentric circle of earth. Among the holiday crowd waved at intervals a colourful banner borne by members of some regional society of the Old Cornwall Federation.

When I arrived, the procession, about a hundred strong, was already moving into the circle, the blue of the robes varied by two or three figures from Wales clad in white and gold. Each year the Gorsedd ceremony is basically the same: when all have taken their places, the Horner, at the bidding of the Herald, sounds the *Corn Gowlas*, or Horn of the Nation, to the four quarters of heaven, and after each blast the Bards cry *Clew!* (Hear!). The Gorsedd Prayer is then chanted, and the Grand Bard three times calls out '*Us Cres?*', 'Is there Peace?', the Bards replying *Cres!*; and the Grand Bard declares 'before the sun, the eye of the day' that the assembly is open. For an open Gorsedd cannot be held in time of war; it was suspended in 1939 for the duration of hostilities, though new Bards were admitted during those years at a closed assembly.

The *Arlodhes a Gernow*, the 'Lady of Cornwall,' a Ceres-figure in robes of red and yellow and attended by two yellow-clad children, is led forward by the Sword-bearer to make an offering of corn and summer fruit which is received by the Grand Bard. There follows the singing, to the accompaniment of the Celtic harp of *Arta Ef a Dhe*, a poem whose burthen is the legend that King Arthur did not die but taries like Merlin in an enchanted doze, whence he will wake and return to lead

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his people. And is it not time that he did so? The ancient spirit of Cornwall, if not of all the Celtic countries,

Must ramble, and thin out
Like milk spilt on a stone

unless this or something equally drastic happens. The process of domination begun centuries since is still active and now meets with little resistance: Cornwall is more Anglicised now than it was a hundred, fifty or even twenty years ago. This is shown vividly in the pronunciation of proper names, particularly surnames, where the stress has been brought forward: Tresid/der has become Tres/idder, Lany/on, Lan/yon. There are those who think that the Gorsedd, which 'exists to maintain the National Celtic Spirit of Cornwall and to give expression to such spirit,' is itself vitiated by the inclusion of non-Cornish members; but it is difficult to see how a rule banning them could be applied. *Mebyon Kernow* whose aims—"The recognition of the Celtic character of Cornwall and its right to self-government in a Federated United Kingdom"—were made public in 1953 by its founder, Helena Charles, has received less attention lately, sad to say. On this occasion of 1950, the visiting Archdruid of Wales, Cynan, made a strong protest at the use of the English language, declaring that it was the first time he had spoken it in a Gorsedd; and he urged all Bards to learn their own Celtic tongue. Though the whole ceremony is performed in Cornish with the exception of the greetings from other countries, there is an accompanying translation in the programme, and all speeches and announcements are delivered in English. The sad fact is that, were it otherwise, few could understand them. But each autumn the chough embroidered in a badge or banner recalls the tradition that King Arthur's soul still takes wing in the form of this bird, haunting the desolate coastal crags which are never far from the scene, a belief once 'a more sacred thing to the men of Cornwall and Devon than church, monks and miracles.'

A commemoration of the deceased Bards is succeeded by the initiation of the new. Alone and bareheaded, each new Bard

ASSEMBLY OF THE BARDS

approaches the centre of the circle where the Grand Bard clasps their joined hands within his own, conferring upon them a Cornish name. This is usually chosen by the candidate himself in consultation with the Grand Bard, and is sometimes no more than a translation of his Christian name or surname; otherwise, it describes some regional link like *Lef camhayl*, 'Voice of the Camel Estuary,' or results from some personal fancy like *Casek Harlyn*, 'Mare of Harlyn,' or connotes the type of work which has earned his admission such as *Den an Puscas*, 'Man of the Fishes.' This qualifying task may consist of proficiency gained in the Cornish language, help for the Old Cornwall Societies or work which celebrates Cornwall in scholarship, administration or the arts. No residential or racial qualification is required.

A fascinating break in the ceremony ensues, when representatives from other countries, in national dress if any—there is usually an Irish saffron kilt and a Scottish tartan—mount the dais and deliver a message of greeting in their native tongue. They may, as delegates from their own country, have been attending the annual Celtic Congress held immediately before. It is refreshing to hear a Celtic language spoken effortlessly and with gusto, for the Cornish tend to speak in flat Anglicised tones with little *blás*. The contrast with the intonation of native speakers is instructive, showing how difficult it is to resuscitate a language that has been moribund for almost two centuries.

Dolly Pentreath, whose memorial is let into the outside of Paul churchyard wall, is usually stated to be the last person who conversed naturally in Cornish; she died in 1777 at the reputed age of a hundred and two. An old print shows her as a witchlike beldame wearing a curious flattened bonnet fastened with a band under the chin; a tucked fichu, or maybe a crochet shawl, is draped round her neck. Her sleeves are rolled up, showing brawny fore-arms; her left fist is clenched, her right hand raised with fingers outspread in gesticulation. Her features are shown as coarse and vigorous—the nose squat, the jaw heavy, the lips hard, the eyes dark, animated and intelligent. She was evidently a fish-wife from Mousehole, for outside the cartouche-design

which frames her likeness a crab reposes to the right, a lobster to the left. Below them is arranged a still life group emblematic of her calling, where fish bulges from a creel and an eel-like creature lies beside an earthenware jug.

But Dolly has a rival in John Davey, who is claimed to have spoken Cornish as late as 1891, at which date he died and was buried at Zennor. It is thus possible that there are a few people still living who have at least heard the language used by a native speaker.

It is interesting to notice the differences in timbre between the various Celtic languages—Irish and Scottish Gaelic on the one hand, and Welsh, Breton, Manx and Cornish on the other. Though each has its distinctive quality, there is enough family-likeness between them all for a non-speaker to mistake one for another; I remember in an English provincial town with what incredulous delight I heard (as I thought) the sound of Irish spoken in the street, and looked out of a window to see a couple of Breton onion-boys.

After the greetings in Irish, Scottish, Gaelic, Breton and Welsh, the prize-winning poem in Cornish was recited by its author, and a list of other winners in the Gorsedd competitions was read. Then came the singing of *Bro Goth agan Tasow*, the words of which are a translation of the Welsh *Land of my Fathers* into Breton and from this into Cornish, to the usual Welsh tune. This was followed by the oath of loyalty to Cornwall taken by touching the symbolic Caliburn held by the Deputy Grand Bard; those unable to reach the sword simultaneously formed a chain by touching the shoulder of the Bard ahead of them. After the singing of *Kernow Cor Mamvro*, *Cornwall our Motherland*, the Gorsedd was closed as it had been opened, with the cry of *Cres!* and the Grand Bard proclaiming that 'it is ended in Peace.' The Bards withdrew in procession from the circle, followed by the Old Cornwall Societies with their banners.

It is not as easy as might be supposed to compose an effective ritual; and since to-day there is little patronage for such an art,

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there are few to develop, or even to pass on, the traditional framework. It may easily decline into that limbo of desuetude where lost arts fall. The Gorsedd ceremony, without being strikingly powerful, can well survive a critical scrutiny, and has many times proved itself capable of impressive performance. Both the ritual and its accompanying music were composed by R. Morton Nance, the present Grand Bard and his predecessor, Henry Jenner.

The Bardic robe with its black-and-yellow striped head-band was designed by Herkomer though based on those of the Welsh Gorsedd; but now, in 1956, a new model has been suggested; it remains to be seen whether this will be adopted. The robe is the hieratic garment *par excellence* and possesses many qualities besides picturesqueness: while distinguishing its wearer from the humdrum modern crowd, it tends to mask other distinctions, as of sex, age and status. It also disguises imperfections of figure: round shoulders, bosoms of unmodish size or shape, pigeon-chests, pot-bellies, too-insistent buttocks, knock-knees and bandy-legs, all are mitigated in the merciful folds of the robe; in consequence, it promotes ease and confidence of movement. But whatever the type of robe—soutane, *sari*, academic gown or Bardic wrap—its effect is often destroyed by disillusioning shoes. Surely some kind of sandal is the only appropriate footwear for it; laced shoes or worse still, clumsy boots showing below its billows detract from their dignity. We realise this and act upon it in regard to the dressing-gown, which is nearly always worn with its special slippers.

The Grand Bard and his predecessor were also responsible for the design of the Gorsedd banner with its three golden rays, symbolising the Bardic Trinity of Power, Wisdom and Love, and of the jewels of beaten copper worn by the various officers. A copper fillet encircles his own forehead, and his profile has sufficient grace for such an ornament. Bardic regalia without the Bardic face are apt to fail of their effect, and a golden oak-leaf crown surmounting a bespectacled countenance was less happy.

The benign ritual of the Gorsedd calls for a day of still sunshine such as not too infrequently occurs during the first week of September. Such it was accorded last year when held at Lamorna's 'Merry Maidens,' when much to my regret I was obliged to miss it. This year the weather did not smile, though rain did not actually fall during the ceremony; but thunder-clouds combined with an icy wind to discourage both participants and spectators. The thunder which had rumbled intermittently all summer and mounted to stormy intensity the month before, reflected the disturbed international situation; it is not for nothing that war-gods are also gods of thunder. I remember all too well the sullen growls, the sinister oppression of the sky in August 1939, and these seemed to be repeated; but now in addition a north-east wind drove livid masses of vapour before it, threatening to hurl a bitter squall upon the assembly. The Gorsedd being held this year, not at a stone-circle but within the ramparts of Castle Canyke, a circular space of ground had been marked off with a light fence. The cold had turned the Grand Bard's fingers purple as he followed his stalwart banner-bearers into the enclosure, but his voice rang out strongly as he demanded whether it were Peace? and was assured by the shout of the Bards and their audience that peace it was. The elements, however, seemed to disagree, for when the Horner turned to the east for his first blast, a gust wrapped a fold of his robe across the *Corn Gwlas*, making it impossible for him to raise the heavy instrument to his lips. Even when he had disentangled it, his numbed hands almost let it fall. The candidates for initiation were waiting without the circle, four men and six women, the latter combing hair disordered by the breeze. Two representatives of the Druid Order of Great Britain were present in their white robes, and one of them spoke for Brittany; but the Gorsedd has no relation to modern Druidism. *Maghteth Myghal* was the only Bard who did not look cold; dignified and serene in her blue drapery, with cheeks unblenched she stood in the chill wind without shivering, warmed by an inner radiance.

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It was not only the weather which, for me, worked to spoil the Gorsedd atmosphere; more disturbing still were the microphone-and-amplifier equipment which relayed the sound of voice and instrument. The microphone destroys the art of speaking in any circumstances, and in the open air it is even less pleasant than indoors. But if the Bardic face is rare, the Bardic voice is rarer. A voice fit to speak words of power scarcely exists. What has happened to the civilised voice, that it no longer commands sufficient resonance of its own to carry over the distance of a few yards? What has happened to the civilised ear that it can endure, even demand, these mechanical stridencies and distortions? The Bards of Bardic times—and indeed much more recently than these—made themselves heard without such aid; why can it not be done to-day? The answer is not far to seek: larynxes and sinus cavities, already irritated by the fumes with which ‘progress’ poisons the air, are continually strained by the effort to be heard above the din of mechanisation; and ear-drums, subjected to the same conditioning, grow insensitive in self-defence. In the short space of years dividing this Gorsedd from the previous one I had seen, further concessions had been made to the age of materialism; at Boscawen-ûn the voices, if not always ‘pregnant with celestial fire,’ were preferable to the crass blaring of the amplifiers at Castle Canyke.

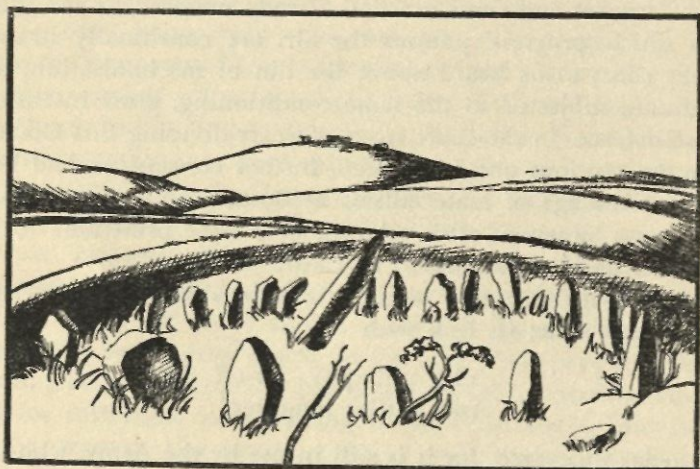
Apart from this, it may be that the emanations of the very site were antagonistic; its link with

‘ . . . old, unhappy, far-off things
And battles long ago’

was to-day unsevered, for it is still in use by the Army, who lent one of their huts as a robing-room for the Bards. This hill outside Bodmin was associated with three of Cornwall’s tragic rebellions against England; in 1483 a great assembly met here in support of Henry of Richmond’s claims against those of Richard III. In 1497 an insurrection to protest against taxes marched across England, only to be defeated at Blackheath, and the same year Perkin Warbeck’s ill-fated army camped on this

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hill. In 1549 the insurgents of the Western Rising did likewise, refusing the new service of the Book of Common Prayer because they found, comparing it to the Mass they knew, that 'it is like a Christmas game'; and because 'certain of us understand no English.' Whether the pretext were fiscal, dynastic, or religious, the underlying motive was independence; and all revolts were not only suppressed but crushed with appalling savagery. The Cornish language did not die a natural death; it was executed like a criminal by the oppressing Saxon power; and the Gorsedd cannot but seem nostalgic held against such a background as this.



BRIDE OF QUIETNESS

A tragedy of an insidious kind has overtaken Lamorna in the last few years; less obvious than through sight, it is through the sense of hearing that the age of mechanisation and profit-making has made here its chief assault. Because of this, I suffer more than the average person since my ears are so sharp that I can almost 'hear the grass grow.'

Besides its tranquility, when the only sound was the voice of birds or the Lamorna Brook, the place has always possessed peculiar accoustic properties. Sometimes in a high wind I have been astonished by the sound of church bells pealing—it seemed, from the swaying rooks' nests in the elms overhead—for Lamorna has no church of its own and its dusty spider-haunted chapel, with weeds growing in the gutter above the door, rarely tinkles its single bell. St. Buryan tower itself is too far away to be heard, even in a west wind, and I did not realize that the bells of Paul could carry so far. But the bellringers there practice for an hour or so one evening a week, and if a strong east wind is blowing at the same time, it will bring the chimes over the hill and down to the road by 'Vow Cave.'

One day at Oakhill an unaccustomed roar, deep-toned and musical, swelled upward from the wood. There was some wind, but I could not believe that wind in branches alone could be the cause; nor did the sound resemble that of any machine. All day it continued; at evening I went down into the wood and penetrated some little way in search of its source, but I could discover none. The profound, muffled, persistent clamour seemed to recede as I followed it. Afterwards I learned from Mrs. Trewern that what I heard was the sea grinding the immense boulders of St. Loy Cove, some miles west of Lamorna, to a smoother grey. The lie of the country makes this 'sweet thunder' perceptible only at a rare combination of wind and tide; for though the main valley of Lamorna carries inland to Tregadg-

with, a side-gully opens to the south, swinging back towards the St. Buryan road and coming out by the farm called Moor Croft. This gully points directly to that other wooded glen of St. Lov which runs down secretly to the sea. Beyond its darkling foliage the path emerges where a few shabby tamarisks border the shore. There the remains of a seat, no more than a rotting plank of wood fixed in the bank and almost overgrown, provides the seeker for the ruined chapel with a sudden respite from the buffeting of wind. Here the very sea is muted, and the depth of peace that enfolds the spot is hardly to be explained by the sheltering vegetation alone.

The sad clanging of the bell-buoy on the Runnel-stone outside Porthgwarra can be heard at Lamorna in some winds; and on foggy nights the double thud of the Longships' signal echoes dully down the valley. Some mysteries of sound, like the trouble of the woods, yield to inquiry, but not all can be tracked down to a common-sense cause. More than once at 'Vow Cave' I have heard a flutter of notes in an unfamiliar mode that struck the ear for a few seconds and then as quickly faded. I have tried to explain it as a radio in a passing car; but no vehicle had passed, and a silently-speeding bicycle would scarcely carry a wireless. On the last occasion, I left the hut and stood listening in the road; the weather was warm and quiet, with a slight evening mist. I could hear the teasing notes rise and fall in an evanescent Celtic melody as they moved up the hill towards Borah; they seemed to be played on some wood-wind instrument, yet they came sounding directly out of the atmosphere. I climbed the gate into the field on the side of the road opposite to the hut and tried to follow them. But as I mounted the slope the tune grew fainter and more fitful, and finally faded into the middle air by the belt of fir-trees bordering Rocky Lane. I still do not know whence it could have issued unless, as old stories tell, it were from instruments accompanying a dance or procession of the fairy host.

But if I was the victim of an 'auditory hallucination,' I am not the only one to experience such at Lamorna. Mrs. Thornley,

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who is to me the embodiment of the Taro's Queen of Cups, her kinship with elemental Water expressing itself through her pilgrimage-quest of Cornwall's holy-wells, heard something very like Caliban's 'thousand twangling instruments.' Monica Baldwin uninhibitedly described the valley's music as the pipes of Pan, while another friend used to hear strange voices in the air. 'It is the atmosphere singing,' as someone has just written to me. To my mind, these experiences of sensitive people confirm what folk-tales have known for ages past, though now shut out of consciousness by a 'closed rationalism.'

It is only within the last fifty years that noise has become a menace in everyday life; it has come suddenly, and may as suddenly depart. The countryside is waiting indestructibly to return where urbanisation has encroached upon it, lurking only just beyond the last houses of a suburb, the confines of a village, or just out of earshot of a busy main-road. There it crouches, weird, untamed, in a profound sense unknown, ready to reclaim its own from the pride of man.

Yet why cannot man's ingenuity, having developed the machine, produce a silent machine? As it is, the chief curse of a mechanised civilisation is noise. Once it was possible to escape from city blare into the quiet of the country, but now rural calm has been invaded in a score of ways. Trucks thunder through the narrowest lanes, tractors and 'cultivators' of all sizes disturb the 'sweet especial rural scene' with their restless stuttering. Even small gardens are not free of the mechanical thud; for the first time I saw the other day (though not at Lamorna) a hand-cutter worked by an electric motor nipping off the tall weeds, accompanied by its appropriate din. All this might be condoned as necessary work quickly done; but more sinister is the craving of the majority for a back-ground of noise to whatever they are doing, whether work or play. The demand for silent machines is evidently insufficient, but if people cannot be brought to realise the torture they may inflict on their neighbours, will they not consider the harm they do to themselves? Indiscriminate 'listening' to radio, for instance, stultifies the

intelligence, and becomes little more than a dazed inattention. Half the radio-addicts do not even know what is being broadcast: the hideous drone acts upon them simply as an aural drug.

Lamorna is a flagrant example of what has happened and is still happening all over the country. Some small place exhales a refreshing quality simply because it lacks the amenities of city life—shops, restaurants, 'toilets,' lopped trees and asphalt roads—it is not overbuilt or otherwise commercialised. But if more than a few tourists patronise it and demand such things, the peace which was its chief charm automatically vanishes. The apostles of 'development' defeat their own ends.

Nature's own noises here are tempered, even to-day, for the worst gales blowing across the uplands on either side seem to miss the valley-bottom itself. As Ellie, the innocent, who lives in a cottage by the now disused Kemyel Mill, often says 'We're blessed here!' In her words there is perhaps an echo of the old Falmouth woman, quoted by the Rev. H. A. Lewis, who used to say of her own neighbourhood that 'Jesus passed by here and blessed these parts.' Or rather both countrywomen may be unconsciously quoting an ancient tradition which concerns several districts of Cornwall—Marazion, Ding-Dong Mine, Lamana or Looe Island, St. Day and St. Just-in-Roseland—and which even now lies only just under the surface of the people's thought. The name Penzance means 'Holy Headland,' perhaps in reference to the same legend; and the parish church still occupies a site on the promontory that juts out west of the harbour.

Ellie used to whistle and chatter to the birds as she wandered down the lane; but there is little pleasure in doing this now, for the leisurely tempo has been dispelled. The harassed pedestrian has no time for birds; he is squashed against the bank while a lorry rushes by, laden with rattling crates of bottles for the trippers who wish to slake their thirst at the Cove. Worse still happens if the lorry meets a motor-coach crowded with the trippers, for the lane in many places is too narrow for two vehicles to pass, let alone allow room for anyone on foot or bicycle as well. It was never built for heavy traffic. Brakes grind,

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gears are changed, engines reverse, fences and walls are often damaged and the stink of petrol fumes and nerve-wracking vibration pollute the once-gracious air.

Each year the boughs overhanging the lane, which used to make of it a green tunnel, are more rigorously lopped and the grass-verges are narrowed, destroying the banks of wild flowers that used to border it, for a wider macadamised track. All this panders to motorists, most of whom are not residents and give themselves no chance to become acquainted with the place. They hurry down the lane at such a pace that they cannot take in its beauties, spend an hour or so at the Cove, then tear back to the main road and on to the next 'beauty spots,' in order to say that they have 'done' them on their holiday. Done for them too, they might add, because the Lamorna that inspired artists is now fast vanishing.

Miss Westrupp's house is still called Lamorna Gate, and once there actually was a gate across the lane where it joins the main road, though she cannot remember this. (If only this gate was still in position!) Years after its actual substance had disappeared, an old man used to sit at the spot once a year to demonstrate that the road was private and only used by courtesy of its owner; but it has long since become a thoroughfare taken over by the Rural District Council.

Forty years ago, I have been told, visitors to Lamorna were a rarity; no one came there except a few artists and writers; and beyond these its only inhabitants were those living from its soil, rooted as its trees, like the forbears of Samson and Oliver Hosking who have farmed here for more than six hundred years. Motor traffic hardly existed; the sound of a car after dark meant drama, the doctor or the life-boat. There was no motor-bus, but a horse-drawn wagon driven by John Henry Trewern, who still farms Trewoofe, used to ply between Lamorna and Penzance once a week.

People relied on their legs to take them where they wanted to go; and if they went less far afield, they came to appreciate their own locality much more than those who always swish through it

in a car. The whole of Cornwall, and Penwith in particular, needs to be walked over, strolled over, mooned over many times before it can be known. Even a bicycle is a hindrance to such communion of person and place; for this countryside, unlike some, is by no means passive but gives to the willing recipient and in its turn receives from those whom it has called to it, and a rhythmic interchange is established.

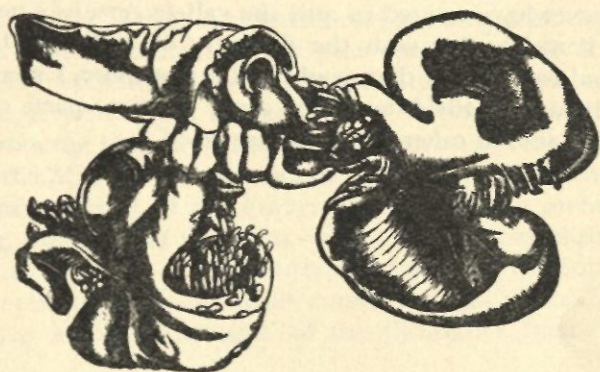
The character of Penwith is small in scale; there are no great heights or depths and, except for the coast scenery, it is not spectacular. But it is enchanted; a breath of peace will suspire through a drift of furze-bloom, cushions of sea-pink, yellow mats of 'little tom-thumbs' and one has no desire other than to breathe it in. A grey wayside cross, almost shaftless, almost hidden in herbage, suddenly shows up at the fork of a road, a token of ageless mystery. The landscape is intensely varied and can change completely in the space of a few paces; and for this reason those who tear through it miss most of its beauty.

The pedestrian is now, however, at a disadvantage, for not only is he driven off the roads but many of the foot-paths are closed to him, having been allowed to become overgrown. They can disappear in a season or two if the undergrowth is not cut back, for low-growing vegetation withstands the gales and thrives in the moist air. Some farmers neglect the paths purposely and discourage their maintenance by slanging the infrequent hiker who may try to pass along, in the hope of rendering the right of way obsolete; others perhaps leave them untended owing to pressure of work. But the Footpaths Preservation Society is working hard to keep open those still in use, and to reclaim those which have become impassable.

It used to be possible to walk through Trewoofe Bottoms, keeping to the woodland path, and come out by Velansagia; crossing the road here and still following the stream, one could strike the main road to St. Buryan by Canopus; crossing this also and keeping to the valley, with the stone-circle of Boscawen-ûn hidden to the right, one would cut over the Land's End road and so, still following the valley, get through to the hamlet of Brane.

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On this walk, the centre of magnetism is Kenijack, the Hooting Carn which, sometimes unseen, sometimes visible as a jagged peak against the skyline, draws the feet on. Its rocky hill rises above Tregaseal, north of St. Just, and the lie of the valleys along this route always points to it. A good walker could make it from the Brane, but from this point on, the going is rough and hilly. The way from Trewoofe to Brane, however, would offer no obstacle to the average walker, low as that average now is, were the paths in order; but I doubt if one could get beyond Canopus, if as far. The valleys are so thickly grown with



bracken, sallows, hawthorn, brambles and sloes, that even the most agile and determined comes through only with scratches and torn clothing.

As early as the pre-war years Lamorna had been invaded by the motor-coach; but during the war, owing to petrol-restrictions, it enjoyed a lapse into its native quietude. When I first came to 'Vow Cave' these restrictions were still in force, and I thus tasted the pristine flavour of the place. Lamorna Lane remained almost

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unfrequented for some time, even after the main road grew busy. But when the Cove became popular with trippers, 'Vow Cave' and other buildings situated directly on the lane began to suffer, especially in the summer season. Noise, dust and litter make such places all but uninhabitable, and certainly far from ideal for concentrating on creative work. In winter, something of the old lure begins to be perceptible once more. One wants, however, to be able to go to a hut at any season, particularly when there is the best chance of sunny weather, and I reluctantly came to the conclusion that I must look for something to take the place of 'Vow Cave.' But the likelihood of gabblings, moanings and borborygms from an ill-tuned radio banished, for me, the possibility of a semi-detached cottage. Were it not for the noise, I should never have wanted to quit the valley; certainly never live beyond Penwith. But with the difficulty of finding a building that I could afford and that would suit my purpose, I was obliged to search further afield, and thus came to know parts of Cornwall that I should otherwise have neglected.

DANCE TO THE SUN

It is possible that I should never have made an effort to see the Helston Furry if I had been undisturbed at 'Vow Cave.' The weather on May 8th is said to be always fine, though this year the tradition was broken by rain and mist. On the two previous occasions however, in 1954 and 1955, when I was able to be there, the air was blue and the sky bright, though there was still a small "blackthorn wind" blowing—a keen breath from the east which makes itself felt while the last blackthorn flowers remain unwithered.

The dates of fair days are usually very ancient, often depending on some crucial moment in the year drama, a crisis of sun or moon. Furry-day falls near the first festival of the May-November year, of which it is the octave; or May 8th is perhaps displaced from the May-day of the old-style calender. It is significant that on the May-day of the modern calender, Helston always has a kind of rehearsal of the Furry; between six and seven in the morning, the roll of the bass drum reverberates through its streets and the town band parades about playing the Furry tune. In the evening, too, the band comes out again, this time to accompany a "walk through" of the Children's Dance a week ahead.

The transliteration of the name "Furry" into "Flora," reminiscent of Classical mythology, is no more than a piece of eighteenth century special pleading given colour, no doubt, by the fact that the Roman Floralia was held at a proximate date, the fourth of the May Calends. A derivation from the Cornish *fer*, a festival, through Latin *feria*, a fair, is probably more accurate—and the fair is certainly a notable part of the festivities. However this may be, May 8th in Helston is a day of flowers; everyone who is to dance, and almost everyone else besides, wears a button-hole of lilies-of-the-valley, while houses, shops and schools are garlanded with bluebells, furze and rhododendrons

to compete for the best-decorated building.

Which is the older, the dance or the fair? No one can be sure; probably the two developed simultaneously, one reinforcing the other. Cornwall is the only county with a patron saint of its own, because it is in fact a country with its St. Michael as a peer to St. David of Wales. Over thirty churches, chapels and altars have been dedicated to St. Michael, from Bude in the north to Chapel Carn Brea, and from Rame Head to the Mount in the south; yet some still prefer the claim of St. Petroc, patron of Bodmin, as Cornwall's patron too. Helston church is a Michael-dedication, and the Archangel also figures on its borough seal. The parish feast is celebrated on Michaelmas Day in September, the occasion of another fair, the famous Plum Fair, where the produce of the fruit growing areas of Kea and Malpas is sold. Though the rite of spring was Christianised by the Apparition of St. Michael at the Mount, a few miles westward down the coast, on a certain May 8th, the feast commemorating this event was suppressed by Pope Benedict XIV in 1742.

One story tells how the Furry dance is an imitation of the fairies who were capering joyously in honour of St. Michael's victory—surely a very temporary one—over the Devil, which occurred on the same day. During the combat, the Devil in the shape of a fiery dragon was struck by a boulder which his opponent had hurled, and fell with a hiss into Looe Pool. Well into the eighteenth century—which seems to have been a period of extraordinary iconoclasm as regards crude stone monuments—this boulder was venerated as the *Carrek sans* or 'holy rock' of Helston; but then it was broken up for building material. A piece of it remains incorporated into the fabric of the Angel Inn.

In common with some other Cornish patrons, St. Michael is not a 'saint' at all, though he has a clearer ecclesiastical background than many others. He is one of the Archangels of the Four Quarters, three of whom are recognised as canonical; but Uriel, ruler of the North, is denied a feast in the Roman Calendar. This Papal disapproval seems strange since Uriel appears in the Book of Esdras, and Raphael, mentioned in Tobit and so

equally Apocryphal, is yet recognised. Is it the same taboo that makes the north side of a church unlucky? It may be that here, on a racial scale, can be found an instance of Jung's 'suppressed fourth principle.'

Much could be written about the Michael-force as it has been sensed in Cornwall—indeed, all over Europe, from Iceland to the toe of Italy and beyond. Some writers have suggested that this Archangel took over for Christianity some of the functions exercised in Pagan pantheons by the sun-god. On the other hand he is also 'Michael, leader of God's host' and therefore a manifestation of the god of war. But the archangel is himself pre-Christian, and his chief correspondence is with Elemental Fire; he is thus cognate with both Sun and Mars. As beneficent fire he triumphs over his own averse aspect, the 'fire-drake.' He is also the South, the Lion of St. Mark. A dell on some south facing hillside which exhales a magical breath, a place deserving of the title "Cattle-fold of the Sun," it may well be a repository for the Michael-force.

The operation of this force may be traced through church-dedications, the sites of whose buildings are magnetically linked. Michael is associated with steep islands and high places, and many of his dedications are hilltop shrines. Those which are devoted to subterranean worship, like Monte Gargano, or are otherwise associated with caves, may have been transferred to the popular Michael from Uriel's earthy province. Meanwhile Gabriel has coalesced with St. John the Baptist, having dominion over Water and the West, the Eagle Kerub; and the healing Raphael with Matthew and the East, the Man-faced Kerub of Air. Of these 'Great Invisibles,' 'Michael-Mark' and 'Gabriel-John' are the most evident in folk-lore; whereas Uriel is hardly traceable at all unless, as Bull-Kerub, he is to be found hidden beneath all taurean rites and ritual games. Raphael-Matthew is a little more in evidence through his governance of the autumnal equinox—St. Matthew's Day is September 21st; but even he has been eclipsed by Michael in popular esteem with the better known feast of Michaelmas a few days later.

Michael is germane to all other dragon slayers from Perseus and Hercules to St. George, since Michael is the Uranian aspect, and St. George the human manifestation, of the same being. They are the Heavenly Twins—Açvins, Dioscuri—rescuers and bringers of victory; there is a vestige of them in the Hobby Horse dance of Padstow, and they can be traced in Helston's Hal-an-Tow.

The first festivity of Furry Day, the Early Morning dance, begins at seven; the girls wear summer dresses in spite of the keen air, the men being luckier in their flannels and shirts. They tread the main route for the dances; and the two couples chosen to lead, as for all other dances of the day, have to be natives of Helston. Next, about half past eight comes the Hal-an-Tow, the ceremony of bringing in the 'May' from the surrounding countryside, which has in recent years been revived by the Helston Old Cornwall Society. This 'May' is not the blossom of hawthorn, which would hardly be out so early in the year, but any budding branch, sycamore with its green flower-tassels being a favourite. Thus the youngsters 'bring the summer home' in song:

With Hal-an-Tow, Rumble O!
 For we were up as soon as any day, O!
 And for to fetch the Summer home
 The Summer and the May, O!
 For Summer is a come, O!
 And Winter is a gone, O!

They pause at several points along the route to sing and cheer, the boys dressed in green and representing 'Robin Hood' and 'St. George.' Formerly there was a 'male-ess' too, as at Padstow, disguised as an old woman in out-dated finery and called 'Aunt Mary Moses'—the 'Aunt Molly' of the Mummings' Play. Somehow these folk-revivals do not seem so artificial in Cornwall as they might elsewhere, perhaps because they have never fallen too far below the threshold of popular consciousness. 'Crying the Neck' at Harvest Home has also been recently revived in several places; but the Furry Dance has never lapsed.

DANCE TO THE SUN

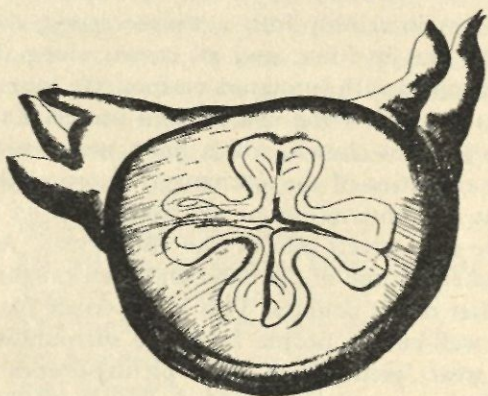
Soon after ten o'clock comes the Children's Dance which takes a slightly different route from the others, as it has to start from one of the schools. Each year it is led by a different school, all the children being dressed in white; but I only saw them as they went about the town afterwards in company with proud parents. Many people like this dance the best on account of its spontaneous gaiety; and any fine day if you watch a school playground during "break" you will see how easily Helston children slip into a dancing step, the sunlight glinting on their hair and bright-coloured clothes. But in spite of a lift from some kindly Australians—Furry-day always attracts large numbers of visitors from the Commonwealth—I arrived only in time for the Midday Dance.

The town was incredibly full; a wide-sweeping diversion for cars and buses was in force, and all streets along the dancers' route were crammed with spectators on foot. We found an advantageous point just below the church, and waited. Except for its hill-top situation this church, which has a neo-classical interior, is in no way evocative of the Archangel: more of the Michael-force seems to be centered on an old stone cross let into a wall in one of the side streets outside the churchyard. After a long time we heard the sound of the band and then caught sight of it, leading the first of the couples. This is the dance for prominent citizens and well-known people from the surrounding country; the women wear 'picture-hats' and 'picture-dresses' with long gloves—no doubt there is plenty of rivalry as to who looks the best—and their partners morning-dress with top hats. Many of the women's dresses, I noticed, were of floral print, but green is seldom worn; it is still considered an unlucky colour for a dress in Cornwall. An assistant in a shop once told me that they always had difficulty in selling a green garment unless bought by a visitor as many of their regular customers felt that wearing one might presage a death in the family.

The chain of dancers wound up the street and disappeared into a house through a doorway decorated with branches; then snaked out by another door and was lost to sight in the crowd.

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The actual steps of the dance are simple; for the first eight bars of the tune the performers walk forward, each couple with hands linked and raised. The figure is executed as a 'foursome' by the first two couples, and so on down the chain. The two men change places, passing by the right and turning each other's partners; then change places again and turn their own. Some think that it was originally a dance in honour of the sun-god, brought to Cornish coasts many thousands of years ago by settlers from Egypt. If so the steps in their pristine form traced a pattern of interlaced triangles enclosed by a circle; and the tune, though now much altered, came from the same archaic source.



Helston's Furry, though the chief, is not the only one; Camborne also had a Furry-day, and something like a Furry-dance is adopted by other towns and villages on festive occasions. On the day of Breage Fair held yearly about the twentieth of June in honour of St. Breaca, school children garlanded with flowers dance through the village. But as they follow in the wake of a van which emits tinned music, it is not surprising that few couples attempt the genuine Furry-steps. This year their chief



Above

Carn Bargas,
Lamorna.

Photo:

Herbert Stone



Below

The Chair-
Ladder,
St. Levan.

Photo:

Herbert Stone

DANCE TO THE SUN

link with Helston was through the weather, the Kerrior countryside being again wrapped in mist. A Furry was also danced at Paul to celebrate the crowning of the May Queen, this being performed by a Vicar's wife, so harmless has the rite of the 'chosen virgin'—once a victim—now become.

After refreshments in a house with a large garden, the dancers re-appeared and continued their way through other streets, but it was impossible to follow them closely through the packed town. The cafés were so full that it would have been difficult to get anything to eat; I did not try, having brought a snack with me which I supplemented at the station buffet. I returned by bus to Penzance, taking the coast through Porthleven, and passed the landward end, in the Penrose estate, of Looe Pool.

THE FAIR AT HELSTON

Next year the same weather prevailed, but I concentrated on what I found at least as attractive as the dancing, the fair held in the town from early morning on May 8th, until well into the night. The trestle tables of cheap-jacks line the steep main street up to the town centre, while booths and side-shows cover a level field in the valley below, beyond the recreation ground.

The first show I visited was billed as "The Cornish Pixie"; marshalled by his barker, we, though spectators, found ourselves on a stage-set depicting a little house in the woods and had to follow a path fenced in by low canvas walls encircling the Pixie's enclosure. Looking over the barrier we saw a mannikin about two feet tall with a large head and a beard; though he hardly recalled the image of a smooth elf by which the pixie is usually represented, he did look rather like a leprechaun or goblin. His whole face had a certain pathetic beauty; his mouth was thin, and there was a tear at the corner of one of his blue eyes. These eyes held a strange expression; they looked without intelligence, yet not without calculation; their deliverances fed, not the discursive intellect but the intuition, seeing below the surface to a level which a more usual combination of faculties would not have grasped.

He wore a hooded velvet tunic of the hue Walter Pater must have had in mind when he described his favourite colour as "impure purple." It was lined with green, fastened with a large safety-pin and rather soiled, as was his plaited grey beard. While he signed photographs of himself and gave change to those who bought them, counting the coins with primitive fingers, he displayed a mixture of deftness and clumsiness: sometimes he dropped the money, sometimes he handled it quickly and correctly. I felt he was working under his manager's eye, or perhaps more remotely, for some syndicate, having no will of his own and sadly resigned to the inevitable.

THE FAIR AT HELSTON

Nearby was a turn calling himself Alonso; he was doing his own barking outside the booth, his lithe indigent good-looks with indoor skin and hair contrasting against the country coarseness of his assistant. She had no stage presence and seemed to be a local girl whom he had hired for the occasion. They stood on a platform, wearing Spanish hats; the girl's pink thighs showed through a cleft on the front of her paper skirt as, unsmiling, she kept time with her haunches to the sound of a Bolero disc. Suddenly, at a roll of drums, Alonso took a spider from a box on the point of a sword.

This attracted the audience; and once he had brought them inside the booth, he proceeded to bite up and swallow six razor blades presented to him by the girl, then drew them out of his mouth, not only whole again but linked together by a cord. Next he threw off his jacket, revealing a torso naked except for a low cut waistcoat, and passed lighted torches over his arms and chest—even over his tongue, which became convincingly blackened. At one point the sparse hairs on his chest caught alight, but he quickly snuffed them out.

Finally, he made his assistant stand in an up-ended coffin, closed the lid and stuck swords through it in different places, meantime warning his audience that blood would spurt out, so they must be careful; but this promise was not fulfilled. He even forced a large tube like a drainpipe through the middle—how the plump wench inside evaded these piercings I cannot guess, but when Alonso opened the lid there she stood, fresh and stolid as ever. The fascination of the act must inhere in that the girl, supposedly deflowered, remains for ever virgin. The six of swords: "earned success"; the ten of swords: "ruin"; the ace of clubs: fire.

When I came out again into the windy sunlight a fight was threatening in front of the Hall of Mirrors. Two drunks, one a red faced exhibition pugilist from the boxing booth, with a towel round his neck, was shouting aggressively at another man; each was surrounded by a mob of supporters who with difficulty kept them apart. Before buying the ticket that enabled me to

see huge images of myself metallicly glossy and grotesquely distorted, I asked the old woman at the till what it was all about; but she did not seem to know.

The Great Wheel, like a star, suddenly stopped in its circular career; something in the machinery had jammed and the clients were left suspended in mid-air. But there was no panic among them, and many couples took the opportunity of kissing, cut off from restriction by their equivocal swinging between earth and air—though this position, far from veiling their amours, rather rendered them conspicuous. A thin blond sailor from the establishment of H.M.S. Seahawk at Culdrose was escorting a girl of a hyperthyroid type, who would have been beautiful in a Pre-Raphaelite way, were it not for a spotty complexion. But, contrary to what those who advertise cosmetics and laxatives tell us, this defect never deters a swain and the blond sailor was no exception.

Below, four young men, perhaps members of the family who run the Great Wheel were working on the machinery. One of these, wearing a silver medal suspended round his neck, was notably handsome in spite of being covered with sweat and grease from the machine. A middle-aged woman, very respectably dressed and with beautiful calm features, watched from the till; and after about twenty minutes the huge wheel began to move again. Here was an atmosphere of family tradition in hard work; the raffishness associated with this type of show-business was notably lacking.

Nearer the entrance of the fair-ground two girls stood at a fortune-teller's kiosk marked 'Gypsy Lee'; one was dark and rosy, with a handkerchief tied over her head, the other more striking, with fine features in a wide-cheeked Balkan face. She wore no make up and her hair, tied in a horse-tail with a magenta ribbon, was what would be called in modern Greek *stakti*, 'dust-coloured.' Another palmist, whose auburn coiffeur failed to make her bold features look less than middle-aged, toothily smiled thanks to an attendant who handed her a tea-tray through a slit in her tent.

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Up the hill towards the town-centre, among the vendors of cheap jewellery and fabrics, was a young man with slicked back hair and a dark red pullover, selling odd lengths of cloth or imperfect remnants.

'A Jew from London,' murmured someone in the crowd with mistrust. But the young man's smile, handsome in the Cornish sunlight, was getting him good business.

A little further up, a 'Gypsy Lee' more spectacular than the palmist stood behind a stall selling remedies; he seemed to be the only quack-doctor at the fair, though his famous 'hedgehog ointment' or 'Romany balm' was not to-day in evidence. A tall florid man with ungreying hair, he affected a horsey persona, dressing in sponge-bag trousers, silk shirt and red tie with a tie-pin in the shape of a hunting-crop. His vigorous patter kept the crowd entranced as he described pills made from 'holy thistle'—evidently the herb referred to in *Much Ado About Nothing*:

Margaret: Ged you some of this Carduus Benedictus, and lay it to your heart: it is the only thing for a qualm.

Beatrice: Benedictus! Why Benedictus? You have some moral in this Benedictus.

Margaret: Moral? No, by my troth, I have no moral meaning; I meant plain holy thistle.

Culpepper says of it

Mars rules this thistle. It is cordial and sudorific, good for all sorts of malignant and pestilential fevers, and for agues of all kinds. It destroys worms in the stomach, and is good against all sorts of poison.

He describes the flowers as yellow, but the only yellow-flowered thistle growing in Britain is the Carline, *Carlina Vulganis*, deriving its name from Charlemagne who is said to have been shown its virtue against the plague by an angel. Ann Pratt notes that it was "formerly valued as a medicine in hysterical cases."

Gypsy Lee was almost as sweeping as these in his curative claims, declaring that it would dispel rheumatism, constipation,

the sleeplessness associated with the change of life, and many other ills.

"Look at me!" he bawled. "I'm sixty-three; I'm supple, I eat and sleep well, and I can make love as well as any of you!"

His audience gasped delightedly.

"To-morrow morning," he went on, "At seven o'clock sharp, I shall do my business of evacuation. And if you take these tablets as I say, you can all do the same!"

He demonstrated the medicine by dissolving a tablet in a glass of water and swallowing it at one draught. This, he said, was an elixir; beside it on the table was another glass which he said was full of poison; it contained an orange-tawney liquid which was probably cold tea. Its function in the monologue must have been purely hypnotic—to give us something to look at.

"Every Monday," he continued indefatigably, "Winter and Summer, I'm at the cattle market, here. And on Thursdays I'm at Penzance."

(Market day in Helston is the only week-day occasion that can displace the date of the Furry).

I expect he went round to other places the rest of the week, making a point of visiting the annual fairs of market towns—Camborne say, or Penzance's Corpus Christi Fair, the only one in Britain to survive the Reformation.

While Gypsy Lee did the 'spouting,' the sales, which were quite brisk, were in the charge of his wife. She was a neat brown body, her hair wound around her head in plaits, with earrings as her only concession to a picturesque mode. She looked well able to take care of herself—a little hard. As I was buying a box of the pills I heard her say something in a language I did not understand, so I asked her what it was.

"I was speaking to my husband in Romyany," she replied firmly.

On opening the packet I found that it contained a number of sage-green tablets, a pixie-charm in some indeterminate metal and a leaflet giving an address in Lincolnshire where one could write for advice. What the pills contained besides holy-thistle I don't know, but they smelt like the unguent of the witch-coven.

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Their effect was strongly purgative; but if they did nothing beyond clear a few intestinal tracts, they must have accomplished a useful job. One is fairly safe in prescribing a laxative whatever the patient's symptoms, since among 'civilized' people there is usually a time-lag (perhaps unobserved) in all the eliminative systems.

One could probably achieve considerable success as a healer without other qualifications than commonsense, imagination, and the use of a very simple pharmacopeia. One would need a laxative and an astringent, a stimulant and a sedative, an expectorant and an emetic, a narcotic and an analgesic. These, as medicines "to be taken internally," with the addition of a few salves, both cooling and warming, for the skin and baths internal and external, would be enough to start with.

At the foot of the hill I came across someone who seemed almost like an old friend: mid-way between the stalls and the fair-ground, a performance was in process at the side of the road. I had caught my first glimpse of this act from a bus the previous year, or rather, of its chief participant. A dumpy figure wearing an aged tail-coat, with a word which (I thought) spelled *Sauvage* appliqué'd in sequins on the back together with three small panels in red and white cotton depicting jungle beasts, was standing then at the road-side. I could not tell whether it was man or woman; the weather-beaten skin and straggling grey hair were non-committal as were the beret, scarf and baggy trousers; but I took it to be a man.

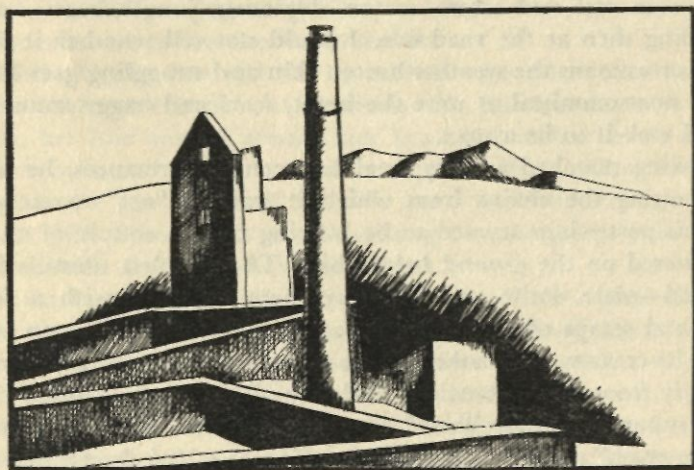
Having snatched a hasty meal between performances, he was unknottng the chains from which it was his "act" to escape. All his possessions seemed to be bulging from a couple of sacks or littered on the ground before him. The simplest utensils for a meal—plate, knife and cup—lay there, together with a few rags and scraps of food. Somehow this grubby still-life no less than its creator, was bathed in an aura of phantasy which arose directly from his unconscious and played itself out through the picaresque of his livelihood in the open air. These minimal "stage props" reminded one of the setting of a *Noh* drama, where

THE LIVING STONES

a length of blue cloth may represent a lake or a few drinking vessels a carrousal, to symbolise rather than express their informing dream.

But this year I was at ground-level and so gained a closer view of my "roads-of-the-moon" type. I found that "he" was a woman and the pink sequined word on her back was "Sausage"—no doubt an allusion to her appearance when tied up in the bag. Her husband, a hint of the "Western" in his costume, did the fastening of the chains; he was a paunchy fellow, perpetually "expecting" in order, perhaps, to compensate for her lack of femininity. I sensed between them a bond like those which she hourly discarded, only to be wound in them once more. Held together by their strange polarity, this aging couple had probably travelled the roads for years in one another's company.

I waited to see the "Five O'Clock" dancers emerge, two by two, from the Guildhall in Coinagehall Street, and followed them for a little on their winding course in and out of the houses. But this year the dance had not the verve of those earlier in the day; though sometimes, I believe, it is more lively than any, not being limited to official performers but joined by anyone among the spectators who feels inclined.



THE 'OBBA 'OSS

It was last year that I saw the Padstow 'rite of spring' for the first time: the dance of the famous Hobby Horse—locally never called a horse but always "the 'Oss." The version "'Obba 'Oss" and the mysterious initials O.B. on the front of his hat make one wonder whether he was ever a horse at all. His effigy bears little likeness to any known animal, but a strong resemblance to the demon-masks of the annual dance-drama at Hemis in Tibet—indeed, to ritual masks in general.

By setting out early from Lamorna, Dorothy's car brought us to Padstow about mid-morning. She made her old 'Rover' do what she wanted and go where she meant it to go: it was not one of those coddled creatures that cannot go over rough ground for fear of breaking the springs, or up a steep hill because it might strain the engine, or down a steep hill for some other obscure technical reason.

Dorothy spent her early childhood in Padstow, her parents living then at the old rectory. The children of the family were not allowed into the town for the May-day festivities; but since the masquers would come round to each of the larger houses in the neighbourhood in turn and perform in the garden or courtyard, they were eagerly awaited by the children at home. The old rectory was usually the last house at which they called, and the family would watch their antics from the study window. In those days the man in the Hobby Horse guise carried a concealed supply of soot, and this he would daub on the window-pane. Less gently-reared children would get a black face if they came too near him.

Like that of Bodmin, the parish church of Padstow is dedicated to St. Petroc, who gives his name to the town; though it is also traditionally the burial place of St. Piran, who is always drawn to a place of sand. A font in the church used to have such virtue that those baptised in it were safe from hanging, a story similar

to that told of the well of St. Ludgvan between Penzance and Marazion. (The first syllable of this "Saint's" name being the same as that of a Cymric solar deity, one may be forgiven for suspecting St. Ludgvan's Christianity). The story of the Padstow font probably originated in some local well and has been transferred to the font in process of Christianisation. But the unconscious connection between holy-well and hempen cord is more difficult to trace—unless it be that it was not a dug well or *pyth* but a shallow pellucid spring or *venton*, from which no winch or rope was needed in order to draw water.

On May-day no one thinks of St. Petroc; I could hear the thud of drums and the distant melody of the May-song played by an accordion band:

Unite and unite and let us all shine
For summer is a come unto day.

Dorothy was visiting her old Nannie who was now almost bedridden. As I waited for her, I glanced down a side street and caught my first glimpse of the local fetish. A black gleaming disk, wheeled this way and that in time to a haunting yet inapprehensible tune, supported at its centre a masked face and a hat like the traditional witch's headgear, or that of 'tall Agrippa'—whose prototype was no doubt the alchemist, Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim—in the nursery tale of *Shock-headed Peter*.

"This," I thought "is the image of a demon, or of some demoniac creature used, in sympathetic magic, to exorcise demons."

The figure was surrounded by a troop of men dressed in white with sashes and scarves of red and yellow, heirs of some magico-terpsichorean fraternity, to-day calling themselves the 'Doom-Bar Pirates.'

A closer view at the corner of a narrow street showed that the fetish was constructed of black oil cloth stretched on a circular frame to form a kind of shallow tub. This was the body of the 'Oss, carried on the shoulders of the man dancing the rôle.

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Surmounting it in the centre, the man's head was covered by the mask and pointed hat in black, white and red, with straggling white hair and whiskers. In front and near the rim of the disc was fixed a small horse's head with snapping jaws and long neck in wood painted the same colours, while in line with it behind was fastened a wispy black tail—these two items being the only concession made to hippic naturalism. The legs of the dancer were visible below the structure, but this in no way dispelled the numinous impression, adding rather to the monstrous impression. While wearing the mask and dancing inside the frame, he impersonated the local demon; and there was no mistaking the mesmeric delight with which the crowd followed his movements. It brings good luck if one can stroke the 'Oss as he passes; and this I did, hypnotised with the rest.

One of the attendants is chosen as "the Teaser," his function being to goad the 'Oss into his traditional capers by prancing before him and brandishing a club. This instrument, evidently a modification of the magician's 'wand of power,' is flattish or spade-shaped, of black leather stuffed with wool, and marked with Cornwall's coat-of-arms and motto in red and white. Sometimes the Teaser is dressed in woman's attire, the 'male-ess' who often accompanies animal-guisers.

The dance itself falls into two parts, one quick and lively, the other quiet when the 'Oss sinks as though exhausted to the ground, while the Teaser bows before him, touching the earth with his club. (The protagonist may well be in need of a brief respite, for the wooden frame is heavy and the mask hot to wear). The accordions play softly and the song bears a refrain lamenting the death of 'St. George.'

O where is St. George

O where is he O?

He is out in his long-boat all the salt sea O

Up flies the kite and down falls the lark O.

There was an old woman and she had an old ewe

And she died in her own Park O.

Then ensues a rapid revival, and the troop march with their band to the next house or street-corner where they intend to perform, the 'Oss whirling all the time; and the ritual is repeated.

There is a link with what is perhaps the most ancient of all dramas, the Mummers Play in the *Dramatis Personae* of which at least one animal-guiser is always found. The theme is death and revival, 'a renewal of conflict such as Gwion made.' It is the battle of the god of the Waxing Year, with his twin the god of the Waning Year; his conquest, death and resurrection. 'St. George' is nearly always one of the characters, and he appears, armed with a club, in the Cornish version, where a Hobby Horse is also included. May there be a trace of this 'St. George' in the Teaser? for he is not primarily one of the 'seven champions of Christendom,' but an Adonis-figure, Green George with his company of fools—or perhaps ultimately Bacchus Diphues, lord of misrule, excess and innocent ferocity, with his train of spotted cats. Hunt suggests that the Hobby Horse was originally a water-horse or Kelpie, and states that at one time the rite was consummated by submerging him in the sea as a protection against cattle-murrain. But this does not explain his presence in the Mummers' Play: perhaps more than one strand of tradition are here woven together? In various forms, the Mummers' Play was once performed all over Europe and beyond; shreds of it can still be found here and there. To maintain, as some fashionable Catholic apologists are inclined to do, that European drama originates in the Mass, is superficial; this folk-ritual is much older, its Christianity being the veriest veneer. (And have such propagandists forgotten the whole of Classical drama?)

Though the matrix which produced his is untraceably ancient, the 'Oss in his present form dates back only so far as 1706—the original 'Oss that is, whose 'stable' is in the Golden Lion Inn from which he rushes out at the stroke of midnight between April 30 and May 1:

The old 'oss with all that campany rum
Will out of the "Golden Lion" come

THE 'OBBA 'OSS

A pirate beating the Brentor drum
That from Waterloo did come
'Obby 'Oss is in the stable waiting for to ride.
In the merry merry month of May.

For now he has a rival in the 'Blue Ribbon 'Oss' with his 'high stepping teaser' and his 'Ossy clan,' an innovation dating from the Padstow victory-celebrations of 1918. This second 'Oss comes from a 'stable' off the market square; but we saw nothing of him for, according to one of the company who followed the first 'Oss, the whole of the ''Ossy clan' was, despite its 'Blue Ribbon' vaunt, incapacitated under the table of an inn. Our informant was certainly no teetotaller, for his pockets and his shirt, bloused over a scarlet handkerchief round his waist, were bulging with bottles. Some of these had leaked through the front of his trousers, making a damp stain on the white which gave him an incontinent air; he told us with many beery smiles that he wouldn't miss May-day in Padstow for anything in the world.

This seemed a much more localised festival than the Helston Furry, and the crowds of spectators, though not nearly so large, were imbued with a more personal fervour. The celebrants have kept this intimate touch even though, as our friend informed us, they were due to perform at the British Industries Fair in London and Birmingham as they had already done at the Albert Hall folk dance rallies; and had also been broadcast and televised.

The reference in the song to the 'Brentor Drum' is interesting in that Brent Tor, a hill so striking in shape that it was used as a sea-mark, is one of the traditional sites of St. Michael's dragon victory. If St. George is the more mundane aspect of the heavenly dragon-slayer, then he provides here a tenuous link with the St. George referred to earlier in the song. Though Brent Tor is in Devon and not in Cornwall, it is not far across the Tamar, being a few miles only north of Plymouth. Folk lore draws no boundaries, for even to-day there is a Hobby Horse much further north at Minehead in Somerset, though to Padstonians he seems a poor creature compared with their own.

Whether the 'drum' has any connection with 'Drake's Drum' I cannot discover, but this latter is still associated in the popular imagination with a demonic guardian who can be roused to exercise his powers in moments of national danger. On one occasion during the war, when I was travelling on the 'Cornish Riviera' express—then somewhat slowed down—a stolid housewife who shared my compartment assured me that she had heard its rolling at the time of Dunkirk. She attributed the misty weather, which supervened during the retreat and made escape possible, to the intervention of Drake. The scattering of the Armada has been ascribed to the raising of storms by the witchcovens of Britain; and their successors are said to have performed similar rites when an invasion by Hitler was threatened.

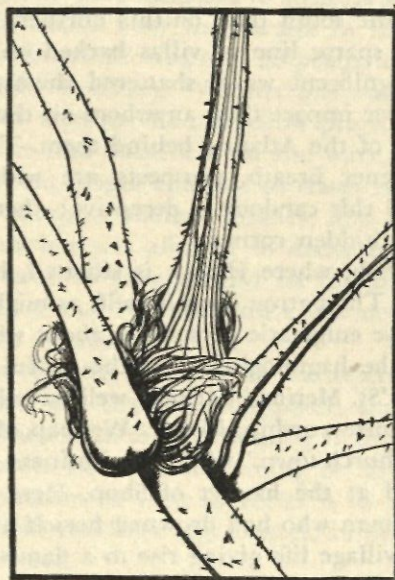
Perhaps there is some tradition of 'the drum' having been used at Waterloo, or of having been occultly heard at that time?

At midday the twisting streets grew silent while the performers vanished for a meal and a rest accompanied, no doubt, by more beer-drinking. We wandered down to the quay and ate our sandwiches while gazing across the water to the conifer-shaded hamlet of Rock on the opposite side of the estuary. The port of Padstow was once a harbour of some importance but to-day, though still a fishing-centre, it seems otherwise but little used. This may be because the estuary of the Camel quickly silts up—the Doom Bar is a bank of sand across its mouth, and a channel can only be kept clear by continual dredging. The single boat in harbour that day was a dredger. A 'merrymaid' was once the town's guardian-spirit, but one day a malicious boy aimed an arrow at her. As she escaped, never to reappear, she flung behind her with a curse a handful of sand; and ever afterwards sand has silted up into a huge bar.

We strolled back to the main square of Padstow to look at the decorations. A May-pole had been set up in the middle of the square, rising out of a mass of shrubs and surmounted by a lattice-work globe of greenery, from which coloured streamers stretched out to the neighbouring houses on every side. Hoops of fern and flowers hung on each line, alternating with coloured

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triangular flags. We soon heard again the music of the accordions and drums, and caught up on the 'Oss and his companions, now well refreshed as they made their way to the Hotel Metropole. They marched into the hall and after performing in one of the public rooms, emerged into the garden and danced again. A woman from among the audience took over the Teaser's bâton and gave a very creditable performance, during which the Teaser himself was no doubt glad to rest. I managed to snatch a few sketches before the procession passed on.



HARLYN PAST AND PRESENT

We did not wait for the evening dances because Dorothy wanted to visit some childhood friends now settled at Harlyn, a few miles beyond Padstow. On the way we stopped for a little at Harlyn Bay, where a small hotel with châteaux in the garden stood in a valley through which a stream trickled towards the sea. It was one of those shallow valleys with low but dense vegetation—yellow-flags, gunnera, bracken, dwarf salallows, wild rhubarb—that one finds all over Cornwall, though their growth is more lush in the south than on this northern coast.

Further on, a sparse line of villas backed on to the beach, where glossy magnificent waves shattered themselves upon the sand with a wilder impact than anywhere on the south, having the hidden force of the Atlantic behind them. The wind blows here with a keener breath, prospects are wider, bays more sweeping, but all this candour is deceptive: there is no less of weirdness in the hidden corners.

St. Merryn parish, where Harlyn is situated, has always had its share of tales. The patron saint herself, as might be expected, is another of those enigmatic personages about whom nothing is known, though the hagiologists try to be tactful. She has been identified with a 'St. Merina,' but may well have been connected originally with horse-worship, like St. Wennap of Gwennap. St. Marryn is the 'church-town,' while the business of the place is chiefly conducted at the hamlet of Shop. Here the pond was haunted by a woman who had drowned herself and her child—some tragedy of village life giving rise to a damp sad ghost.

More lively is the story of the wicked maid who once used to work at the vicarage; she was frequently dismissed but always re-instated. Like the rest of the parishoners, she was not above a little smuggling; maids would often be aboard a small vessel, helping their employers to land contraband, when the Excise men paid a visit to the village. The boat would have to stand

off-shore with its temporary cap-and-aproned passengers until, literally, the coast was clear. This was all quite normal; but stranger doings were reported of the vicarage maid. She had been a pupil at the last of the 'Dame's Schools,' conducted at Tregear, the deserted village known as 'Little Hell' because most of the houses were falling into ruin. The teacher was also the local witch, and her pupil 'had been taught to say more than her prayers,' as she herself would darkly hint.

Further on at Constantine Bay, a vaster sandy sweep than Harlyn and facing westward instead of north, lived an old man who 'lighted' many a ship on to the rocks and killed any members of the crew who managed to struggle ashore. Smuggler and wrecker, he would bury the corpses in the garden of his cottage; but his victims allowed him no peace, making his nights hideous with their screeching. Whether this was the cry of their unquiet spirits or whether the old fellow projected the voice of his own conscience into those of wind and wave, he finally could endure the place no longer and had to leave. His stolen wealth enabled him to move to another locality; and the cottage with its sinister reputation was allowed to decay untenanted. As a child, Dorothy used to play around its foundations with her sister and brothers; but even this trace has now vanished, the spot having been overbuilt.

It is a haunted site that gives rise to the supernatural manifestations, or at least the charged atmosphere, sometimes noticed in new houses which seem to have nothing in the history of their fabric to explain it. To try table-turning or any other form of drawing-room spiritism in such localities is to ask for trouble, as one or two, both residents and visitors, in St. Merryn neighbourhood have found.

A lost city buried under shifting sands lies at the edge of Constantine Bay—a story that has been told, not without evidence, of places all along the northern shore from St. Ives to Pentire Point. It is a coast of sand; past the tiny village of Rock on the Camel Estuary stretches an area of immense dunes held together with coarse grasses, where some of the sparse remains

of Roman occupation in Cornwall have been found—scraps of pottery, glass and brooches. Beyond again, under the shadow of Brea Hill's hump, those deep banks have several times engulfed the church of St. Enodoc, where, even to-day half buried, its leaning spire scarcely tops the dunes. In the course of its history it has been dug out, neglected and re-buried more than once, man and wind-blown sand battling for its possession. At one time the door was so choked with sand that the clergy were lowered through the roof; and it is now used only once or twice a year. Constantine has remained lost, except for the ruins of its ancient church whose interments go back to pre-Christian times.

We approached Harlyn House by the back drive, past some out-buildings and a few wind-swept elms, and found it a severe stone mansion originally of the eleventh century and now scheduled as an ancient monument. It was restored in 1634 and the date carved above the chimney-piece in the billard-room. Formerly it was the seat of the family of Tregoye, which became extinct in Henry VIII's reign. Later it belonged for years to the Helyar family, and it was in the days of old 'Squire' Helyar that two neck-crescents of Irish gold, almost identical with the one found at Gwithian and now in the Museum at Truro, were unearthed by chance on his land. As Hencken points out, in ornaments of this type the metal is beaten so thin as to have been unsuitable for frequent use; I suggest that they may have had a magical significance, and have been worn only on ceremonial occasions, perhaps for invocations of the waxing moon, governess of growth and fertility. A conspicuous necklace is worn in their rites to this day by devotees of certain moon-cults.

Tom Helyar had two daughters; one of them, who was always known as "Antics" on account of her whimsical ways, nevertheless made an advantageous marriage to a judge in India. It was her sister who outraged the family by a misalliance with 'a bonny labouring-boy':

His cheeks are like the strawberry
His eyes are black as sloes

HARLYN PAST AND PRESENT

He's mild in his behaviour everywhere he goes
He's neat and bright and handsome, his skin is white as snow
And despite my parents' malice, with my labouring boy I'll go.
When the Helyars left, Harlyn fell into disrepair, being uninhabited for upwards of twenty years.

An Irish artist, J. H. C. Millar, settled in St. Merryin and married a beautiful girl of the neighbourhood, after providing her with a good education. He subsequently found, however, that it was not easy to bring up a family on art alone; and was glad to accept the suggestion that his children should come to the old vicarage and share lessons from their tutor. After the war one of the sons, now Commander Millar, returned to the scenes of his childhood and, having bought and renovated Harlyn House, settled there with an elderly aunt. When we arrived, however, it seemed that tidiness alone had done little to mitigate its bleak northern look, and it was some time before we could make anyone hear, or gain admittance. I could imagine that its several reputed ghosts still walked—the spectral white cat that used to haunt the shrubbery, or the monstrous apparition that paced the front avenue. A workman employed on repairs once gave notice, declaring that he had no objection to the usual type of ghost, but he could not bear to meet a man with a dog's head early each morning when he arrived on the job. His testimony seems to be a folk-corroboration of the *Chaldaean Oracles*:

From the Cavities of the Earth leap forth the terrestrial Dog-faced demons, showing no true sign unto mortal men.

These are the opposers of Anubis who arise 'from the confines where matter ends.' Zoroaster, or whoever it was who wrote these "*Oracles*" also tells one what to do in such a contingency:

When thou seest a terrestrial demon approaching, cry aloud and sacrifice the stone Mnizourin.

But the poor workman, not knowing how to do this, was constrained to retreat.

At last our knocking and ringing were heard, and Commander Millar came out to welcome us. He ushered us into a sunny room at the back of the house which looked out on to the

garden, where the old aunt was accustomed to sit. She was much enfeebled now and rather deaf, but she kindly dispensed tea to us from a large silver pot, after which Commander Millar showed us round the house. In the course of restoration, a room with a door but no windows had been discovered in the angle of the staircase, but this had since been removed. Most interesting was the dove-cot, Norman in origin and one of the two earliest examples in the country, standing just beyond the window of a ground-floor room.

The owner's hobby was collecting clocks, and many fine specimens including several 'grandfathers' and one or two by Tompion, were shown us in the hall and on the wide staircase leading up to the landing.

Nearly all the principal rooms faced north, and the chief 'haunted' room, the central one on the first floor of the main façade, was no exception. It was charmingly decorated, the walls faintly pink with graceful glazed cupboards sunk in; and was now used by Commander Millar as an office, though for years it had been closed altogether. Once it was the bedroom of a girl who refused to marry the man chosen for her by her family; she was consequently shut up in it with her little dog until her early death. Martyr to the custom of the 'arranged match,' she was wont to disturb present day occupants in retaliation. But the household did not seem worried by Harlyn's phantoms; and if odd sounds were sometimes heard, they were taken as one of the perquisites of a historic mansion. Possibly, too, the utilitarianism of the modern pig-farm has dispelled some of its more macabre emanations.

On our homeward journey, we passed St. Bennet's Abbey at Lanivet. No one driving along the A30 route south of Bodmin can fail to notice this low-built Tudor house, white painted standing almost at the roadside on the right and backed by trees. Alas, it would no longer be delightful to live there—lovely as is the atmosphere which it exhales—owing to the shattering noise of motor-traffic that now rumbles by, day and night. It is only one of many houses all over Britain which, architecturally

charming, have become uninhabitable to a sensitive person through the roar of a main road.

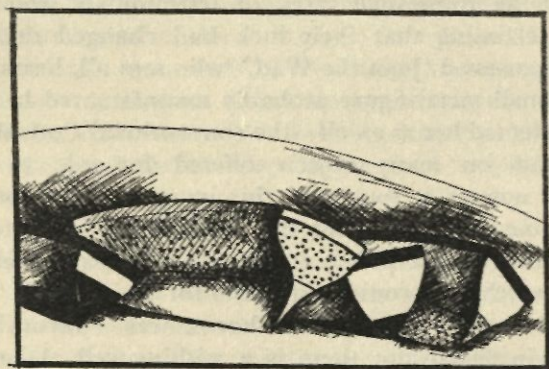
St. Bennet's, originally a Benedictine foundation, changed hands several times until, early this century it became the home of a retired sea-captain who embellished it with Buddha images as well as Christian figures collected on his travels. An original himself, he fathered an eccentric family. One daughter would come to the front door dressed in a grubby pink dressing-gown and smoking a briar pipe; like many others in Cornwall who were 'not quite exactly' she ended 'at the top of the hill,' i.e., in Bodmin Asylum. Her sister, only less unfortunate, married a land-owner who was often seen to drag her round their dining-table by the hair. Their brother became a barrister, but ultimately returned to the district; though a regular church-goer, he was not altogether a welcome one, since it was his habit to lay a loaded revolver on the pew before him, terrifying the local cleric.

More recently, the garden of St. Bennet's was used for the cultivation of canes and bamboos; then a man from the north-country took over the property for the purpose of another commercial enterprise, the distribution of lucky charms. He advertised widely in the press particularly in popular 'occult' magazines, with an impressive array of testimonials from satisfied customers claiming that their luck had changed dramatically once they possessed 'Joan the Wad,' 'who sees all, hears all, does all.' The small metal figure probably manufactured in Birmingham, represented her as an elf—the conventional Cornish 'piskey' who appears on many objects offered for sale to tourists. Vulgarised now as a 'souvenir,' this image may yet perpetuate some genuine tradition about the look of the 'small folk.' But was 'Joan the Wad' a piskey at all? She may have been all too human, a witch who could cast spells for good or ill. 'Joan,' as Professor Margaret Murray has shown, was a favourite name among the witch-covens; there is a wishing-well at Lewannick called 'Joan's Pitcher.'

Each individual charm, according to the advertisement, was dipped in a well at Lanivet and would be sent together with a

'history,' to anyone who enclosed five shillings. Was this the stone-canopied well at the back of the house grown with wistaria and other creepers, a square basin surrounded by rhododendrons and ferns? St. Bennet's is empty again, and Joan is now distributed from Polperro, whence also hails 'Glama, the oriental charm of luck and love.'

When Joan appeared at Lanivet some years ago, she seemed to be the only luck-bringer of this type in the field; but she heralded a bevy of others, and now besides Glama, there is Lady Luck, the Lucky Serroom, Beppo's Little Man, the Horn of Plenty and the Wheel of Life, not to mention such die-hards as the Rabbit's Foot and the Four-leaved Clover to choose from, most of them with a 'legend' or 'history' thrown in, for about the same price as Joan. Presumably almost anything if presented with the appropriate patter, may help people who are suggestible by providing a focal-point for their positive feelings of hope, determination and confidence. But if such feelings are minimal to start with, something more potent than a commercialised 'charm' will be needed to develop them.



‘HOUND-VOICE’

Sometimes at night I have heard a swift brushing sound with a pressure against the outer wall of the hut, as though a fox were taking a short cut through the enclosure in the roadside coppice where it stands. On the croft-land of the valley's eastern slope I have occasionally caught sight of a tawny shape gliding along a boundary bank; and about the crevices of Tregiffian Cliff I have seen foxes sniffing the air and enjoying the sun outside their holts. They seemed to me wild creatures to be watched with interest, not pests to be exterminated nor totem-animals to be preserved for a rare ritual-killing.

I had never followed a hunt, had scarcely been to a meet of hounds; but when I read in *The Cornishman* that the Western Hunt was holding its first meet of the season in the square of Paul churchtown on October 10, I determined to go. The first cubbing meet, that is; the opening of the full season coincides with St. Just Feast on November 1.

If I may explain my feeling on the subject of ‘blood sports’ without priggishness, I would say that the human race can never enjoy the freedom of the cosmos until it ceases to exploit the other races with which it must share its life. In other words, you cannot count on benevolence in your surroundings unless you practice harmlessness yourself. (Even then, you have to take the risk that your environment may be less enlightened than you are).

With these thoughts in the background of my mind, it is not strange that I have never participated in hunting; though it is true that on my only day in Spain I watched a bull-fight. There, one was hypnotised by the glamour of assistance at a most ancient ceremony, calling to mind the bull-games in honour of Minoan Pasiphae when young adepts somersaulted through the crescent horns. The ballet-like precision of the matadors’ performance—silk stockings emphasising their leg-muscles and magenta and

green costume, glistening with spangles, stretched homosexually tight over the buttocks—hinted at a fraternity even now carrying on a secret tradition. Do not the elegies of Lorca and Alberti for the dead matador Sanchez Mejías seem to lament a priest of the moon, celebrating the association of moon and blood? The observances of the *corrida*, the mounted herald dashing round the ring and flinging down the keys in front of the mayoral box, the brutal music of trumpets, the intense contrasts of the circus itself—one half in light, the other in shadow—suggest a hidden lunar quality even beneath a blazing sun. And lunar too, is the crowd emotion that follows intently how each performer acquits himself, with yells, with sighs, with caps and cushions tossed in the air.

It is cruel but it is exciting; and in the excitement one forgets all compassionate sympathy with the animals involved. The same is true of hunting; but in spite of its brutalities, this sport lacks the baiting element of many others, and this absence of sadistic tentalisation claims its one humanitarian defence.

Hunting no less than bull-fighting has its ceremonial links, and the Western Foxhounds were meeting as an extension of the Paul Feast celebrations. In West Cornwall a church feast is no mere metaphor; the villagers spend their free time for two or three days, or even longer, in visiting friends and relatives; and at each house there is plenty to eat and drink. For communal activities there are dances, whist-or euchre-drives, concerts, sports—the nature of the entertainments being to some extent determined by the season in which the parish feast falls. Some places, particularly those connected with a fishing-community, decorate themselves with flags and streamers, and it was so here, Paul being the church-town of the Mousehole sea-board.

Though the date was the traditional one for lighting winter fires (and this is usually too late for comfort) it was a lovely day, still warm enough to wear a cotton dress as I set off on foot, following the road beyond Oakhill. Even at this late season one still saw butterflies, those creatures of poignancy and hope, the last and first signs of summer, departed and returning souls.

'HOUND-VOICE'

To-day I noticed the occasional flutter of a clouded-yellow over the yellowing countryside. Perhaps I dawdled in the October sunshine, for by the time I reached Sheffield Moor the meet itself must have been over, (Cornwall has its 'Sheffield' and its 'Brighton,' both tiny villages). Soon the pack could be seen coming down from Paul. One or two horsemen were stationed about the fields to the right; and several cars had pulled in, whose owners, together with an assortment of foot-followers, were standing about expectantly. I felt no fear of the horses, though I had anxiously promised myself on the way that I would keep clear of their hooves.

Now the hounds turned off the road, following a huntsman on foot who urged them forward with peculiar cries like "Ack! Ack!" which is perhaps a variant of 'Hark!' These calls are very ancient, and vary much according to locality; here, perhaps, some of them are derived from Celtic words. If any such survive from the time when Tristram and King Mark hunted in the Cornish forests, it would be likely to be with this small pack, the "first and last" hunt in England. I was interested to find, some months later, that the newly instituted department for folklore at London University is collecting traditions concerned with hunting, trapping and kindred subjects.

The Hunt was moving up the shallow scrub-grown valley of Raginnis Moor, the hounds now out of sight and giving tongue. Some of them I had perhaps seen as puppies, for many of the neighbouring farms 'walk' them for the pack, and one used to come down from Trewoofe begging for scraps. I ran across several fields, keeping to the higher ground and pausing now and again at the summit of a turf-bank hedge to have a better view. Many other people were following on foot, and I caught a glimpse of the flaxen hair and scarlet jerseys of Tilly's three children as they scrambled over hedge and ditch. At the far end of the Moor, fields bordered the road to Castallack and here more cars were parked by spectators and more riders joined in. The hounds were no longer to be seen, so I followed some horses back along the Castallack road till it joined the road

from Sheffield going in the direction of Trevelloe.

I heard a snatch of conversation as this cavalcade, smelling of leather, sweat and horse-dung, clattered by. A man with a penetrating 'county' voice was explaining to his companion, a groom perhaps, that, "They're cutting down so many trees, the whole country'll be as smooth as a baby's arse."

The same feeling of license which inclined to coarseness in the man's speech was abroad in the countryside where gates stood open as though the land were free to all, more even than if it were held in common. Some farmers may have removed barriers merely to forestall the destruction of their hedges; but most of them welcome the hunt—as much for the fun of the thing as for its use in keeping down the foxes.

I tore across some rough fields and crawled through a fence, emerging upon the furze-covered hill above the Red House, home of the Master of the hunt. The building is not red but Cornish grey and white, and backed by a pile of immense flat stones, called locally a 'Druids' Altar.' Under other aspects of the sky these Cyclopean rocks take on a sinister air; but on this day of bright sun and blue distance their mood was almost friendly. They consented to accommodate a crowd of sightseers, providing a platform for them to gaze over the woods of Trevelloe that filled the valley winding inland towards the hamlet of Kerris and the clear views beyond. This natural look-out was easy of access from the back, but the flattened masses of granite jutting from the hillside presented a vigorous escarpment to the west with a drop of twelve foot or more.

Down this I slithered, for apart from a few stragglers, nothing was to be seen of the hunt; and after crossing a small paddock, I plunged into the coniferous darkness of the wood. Many trees had fallen in a recent winter storm, and many others had been cut: but I well remembered my first visit to Trevelloe, the silence of the pine-needle carpet, bare of undergrowth, the air still as if entranced beneath the lofty branches. Today, this brooding quiet had been dispelled by the shouts of small boys who were glad of the excuse of following the hounds to explore

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the gigantic moss-grown rocks within the wood. These formed, in one or two places, something almost like a cave; but after clambering with them about these, I heard warning shouts from the lane below, so I hurried through the ferns and brambles, avoiding Trevelloe House, and tried to catch up on the hunt, by this time far ahead.

I ran down the road as far as the Tregadgwith turning and the little group of buildings where Lamorna pottery is now made, but which is still known as ‘the factory’ because it was once a milk-factory. Just beyond this, deep green under trees, runs the gated lane leading to Bojewan’s Carn; and along this I went, after opening the gate for some belated riders. I was soon climbing the steep fields to the left; here again, on the brow of the hill stood groups of spectators, and cars crowded the Tregadgwith road running alongside.

I stood on a hedge, looking across another wooded valley, but could see little, so I rested a while against a bank and ate the fruit, sandwiches and chocolate from my sling-purse.

The wide valley of Bellowel, parkland of hawthorn, is usually so peaceful as to seem haunted, but now it rang with the cry of hounds as nose to ground, they ran in and out of the bracken encouraged by a huntsman or two on foot, bright-jacketed, sometimes blowing a blast on a little horn. There is something musical in this sound, whether by setting—the October woods—or by association—the blast of Roland from his ‘dark tower’ of mountains; so also in the voice of hounds, a breed that gives tongue to a long past:

. . . besides the groves,
The skies, the fountains, every region near
Seemed all one mutual cry: I never heard
So musical a discord, . . .

They vanished up the valley, towards Bojewan’s Carn—rocks that command the place where this inland winding of Lamorna Valley divides into two, one fork emerging by Drift on the Land’s End road, the other striking the way to St. Buryan just below Canopus. Faint cries echoed from Kerris, where the main

body of the hunt was running unseen; I despaired of catching up on them and made my way back towards Trevelloe, turning into a field that rose abruptly to the right just before the copse-land of the lane to Trevelloe House.

A lull seemed to have descended on the chase; hounds could be heard no longer, riders were out of sight. I sat on the slope above the road, gazing across the autumnal coverts opposite where, walking home on frosty nights, I had often heard the sharp barking of a dog-fox. Below me three urchins lay sprawled on the grass verge, utterly spent; the sun was burning the nape of my neck, and gleaming on the roofs of cars where an elderly farmer or two dozed with closed windows.

A yellow dog something like a corgi came padding down the centre of the road. Its tongue lolled, dripping with sweat; I could see no tail, it may have been held low from fatigue. But it did not seem frightened, and for a few seconds its boldness prevented my recognising the day's quarry. When I did, I remained perfectly quiet, hoping it would escape in the general somnolence. What made it choose the road? Proverbial guile, or was the creature too exhausted to know where it was going? But though it had passed the cars without being noticed, it caught the attention of one of the small boys, who sprang up, calling excitedly. A farmer on my left took up the cry, hollooming so loudly that a huntsman answered him from the far side of Trevelloe.

"Where did he go?" the farmer shouted to the boys.

"In there!" they answered, pointing to the scrub that edged the road.

I had enjoyed chasing after the fox as much as anyone; had dashed without effort over the rough ground, noticing no sense of weariness. But I did not want the animal to be caught and killed, especially after I had seen it. Shy, quiet and yet fearless, it seemed like a creature one could have as a pet, even though it never allowed itself to be tamed. I trusted to the leisurely methods of the hunt to ensure its escape.

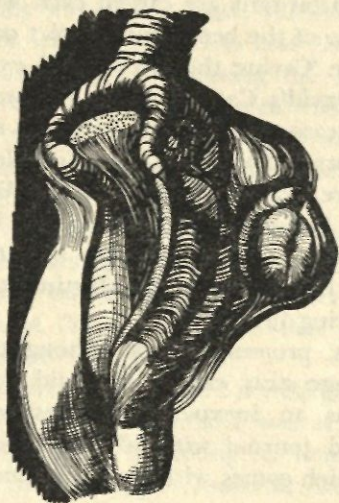
I was justified, for it was a good ten minutes before a somewhat jaded pack emerged from Trevelloe lane and poured down

'HOUND-VOICE'

the road followed by bucketing riders, and re-entered the lower coverts. The fox had gained time enough to go to earth, and there was no kill that day, as I afterwards heard.

Walking back past 'the factory,' I remembered that Dorothy and one of the neighbouring farmers had recently found a vixen in a trap towards Grumbla and, even though their poultry might suffer, had released the spring that set her free. She had been so dazed that at first she had not moved away, but laid her head on a bank as if exhausted with pain; then, she had recovered a little from shock and vanished quickly towards her holt. Tilly too, told me how she and Alec used to let foxes go whenever, as occasionally happened, they found them trapped.

What must a wild thing, in its unbroken unity of being, make of human inconsistency, which can set cruel traps, but sometimes releases their victim; hunts, but at the same time preserves its quarry; enjoys a day's run but cannot face the kill? My legs were aching now so much that I could hardly climb the gate into Clements' fields, and by the time I reached the stepping-stones over the stream at 'Vow Cave' I could hardly cross them. I was glad to rest at home.



PERIPHERAL

Cornwall has an attraction for the seeker, bearing as it does traces of those sunken countries, Lyonesse and Atlantis, which are lost in the depths of every mind. This 'end of the land' exerts a magnetic pull on those who are dissatisfied with themselves or their environment: it promises something other than a mere humdrum existence. This explains why many people from 'up country' come to settle here after retirement; others cannot wait for that but, irresistibly drawn, will jettison their prospects and come down here to find not only a living, but a life worth living.

With those who search will be found those anxious to guide the searcher. From Altarnon on Bodmin Moor comes the widely advertised 'Thought Bricks' system of mind-training. Altarnon is a charming village with a crescent of cottages in a hollow and a church tower rising among trees above a stream with a ford. The church contains some interesting wood-work; the bannisters of the altar-rails are carved each with a letter of the alphabet, and some of the bench-ends depict once-familiar scenes of village life, like 'Crying the Neck.' As I examined these, the thought of St. David's Cathedral in Pembrokeshire, which I have never seen, came persistently into my mind; and later I found to my surprise that the St. Nun or Nonna whose 'altar' was dedicated here, was the mother of St. David. A holy-well of her name is to be found not far from the Cathedral and she has two in Cornwall—one at Pelynt and the other here at Altarnon which, like that of St. Martin at Liskeard, had a reputation for curing lunacy.

M. E. Williams, promulgator of 'Thought Bricks' does not, I believe, encourage stray callers, so I did not venture to look him up. He runs an inexpensive correspondence-course and edits a duplicated journal with illustrations, called *Bernard's Weekly News*, which comes with each instalment. This supplies

notes of kindred activities and items about students of the course, past and present—'Bernard' refers to these as his 'family'—thus providing a link between them. Pen-friendships develop, the lonely are lonely no longer; and this social aspect is probably as important as that of 'mind-training,' for misfits and depressives are made to feel that someone takes an interest in them—the first step to their better adjustment. 'Bernard' has collected an array of testimonials from satisfied students whose lives have taken a turn for the better after subscribing to the course. One has obtained a job, another a house, a mate, or a windfall, as the case may be.

At the other end of Cornwall is a group not too dissimilar in aim though different in method, which was founded in 1954 by Barney Camfield at Trevurvas, near Helston. I came into touch with it by a somewhat devious route, in fact, through another 'peripheral' organisation now defunct, called the Penzance Astronautical Society. This body, also founded in 1954, interested itself in Astronomy, Astronautics (Rocketry), and Unidentified Flying Objects. I went to a lecture by Desmond Leslie given under its auspices in 1955, which dealt with Flying Saucers; and Barney was in the chair. When afterwards I went up to the platform with Annis, Tilly and Diccon to ask a few questions, he invited us to a meeting the next week at the Yacht Inn. Annis and I went; I did not know what to expect but assumed that we were to deal further with the subject of U.F.O's. I was astonished, therefore, when the proceedings were opened by a short prayer and closed by a silent meditation, both these being conducted by the chairman. Sandwiched in between were an inspirational talk from Barney and questions from his adherents; I was assisting at a gathering of the Society for the Promotion of Optimism and, rather to my surprise, I enjoyed the experience.

Still more to my surprise, I found myself going to a number of such meetings; in fact, whenever I was at Lamorna I tried not to miss the fortnightly gathering in Penzance, which was subsequently held in an upper room at The Abbey Wharf

Restaurant. The talks were by no means abstruse intellectually: they told me nothing I did not already know through my own researches; but their attraction was a relaxed and informal atmosphere, and they seldom failed to provide a good laugh. They served as a medium for putting people in touch with one another; many friendships and at least one romance owe their inception to the S.P.O. A friendly attitude to the problems of others, whether in a practical or in a less tangible realm, often helped to sort out difficulties. Mutual assistance along almost Masonic lines seemed to be a part of the movement; this attitude was intended to apply to everyone, but members naturally heard of other members' needs first.

Not that there was anything strictly to be called a membership; the group was very loosely-knit and there was no set programme for the meetings. Sometimes the prayer and meditation were omitted, but the interval was always occupied by coffee or tea. Books, mostly dealing with esoteric subjects from a more or less popular angle, were spread about the table, and anyone could borrow one free of charge and keep it indefinitely. There seemed to be little check on what was taken or returned; but recently an adherent has been acting as librarian.

Barney was by no means inaccessible, and was always ready to welcome enquirers, though he advised an appointment before calling because of being frequently 'on his rounds.' He might not be able to sort out your particular difficulty, but he would certainly try. It was not long before I was invited to visit his headquarters at Trevurvas. This is a tiny hamlet of farms and cottages—white, pink and grey—off the road to Ashton, which clings to the steep fields above Pengersick Castle and looks out to the sea that washes Prah Sands below. The sub-soil is part of that granite mass which culminates in Tregonning Hill. Barney lives with his wife Mary and daughter Jessica in a cart-house loaned by Eric Barnes, a friend who runs a market garden in the village; and one or two other sympathisers live near by. The shed has been converted into a bungalow of three rooms and a kitchen; there is no electricity and the water-tank

has to be filled from the fountain on the green outside. While walking on the beach one day, Barney picked up a small metal plaque which must have belonged to a boat since it was incised with the words 'Chart House'; this he fastened beside the door of the bungalow to give it a name.

The 'office' or 'consulting room' was a wooden hut beyond the patch of vegetable garden, alongside which was parked a caravan to accommodate patients, helpers or just tenants. The office housed a library from which books were brought to the meetings, or posted to those interested. It also contained a desk, files, and a green plush couch where patients could recline. Above the desk were a crucifix, a statuette of the Buddha and an immense pair of buffalo horns; Barney was taking no chances, evidently.

It appeared that he was willing to listen to anyone's troubles, material or psychological, and to set them right if he could. A member of the Guild of Pastoral Psychology, his chief gifts for the work he has undertaken are cheerfulness and a kind heart. While these qualifications are less sketchy than they appear, it is also true that they are inadequate for dealing with certain types of neurosis, or with psychosis of any kind. I do not myself think that goodwill, however abundant, can take the place of knowledge, since result does not inevitably follow on intention.

In making a diagnosis Barney uses the methods of Lüscher and Koch: he asks the prospective patient to choose four colours out of a possible eight and to draw a sketch of a tree; also to give the usual details as to birth-date required by astrologers. For some of the interpretations of this astrological data, he calls upon Delphica Huntress, a friend living in a nearby village who was a pupil of Jung's astrologer, Leo French. From all this material, together with an example of the handwriting, he builds up a picture of the patient and his problems, and then gets to work on it with the exercise of intuition, common-sense, kindness and above all—optimism. He analyses the dreams according to the symbol-systems worked out by the

classic psycho-analysts and adds these findings to his own interpretation of the rest of the material. He treats patients either by interview if they live near enough, or, more usually, by writing them helpful letters of advice. This is not, and does not claim to be, deep analysis of any school; but where the patient needs no more than someone to take a kindly and perceptive interest in his affairs, the results are beneficial. When worries are disentangled, physical health often improves as well.

Barney does not set out with any preconceived notion of how people should be improved, and he differs from the author of the 'Thought Bricks' course in that he does not recommend 'demonstrating for' what you want (to use an Americanism)—that is, forming a conscious desire for what you think will make you happy and mentally concentrating upon it. Philosophically, Barney agrees with H. T. Hamblin, author of *Within you is the Power*, and editor of the *Science of Thought Review*. Very roughly, the doctrine is this: Relax, hand over yourself and your problems to a higher power (i.e., the superconscious, though this term is seldom used); work for your aims but do not be attached to them—accept the situation if they do not materialise; whatever is, is right.

Whether this is a complete blue-print for health and happiness I cannot say, but it is obviously not a regimen which will fit its adherents for a successful life in a competitive society. (The answer would no doubt be: Who wants that kind of success? True success is something different—all these New Thought writers overwork the word 'true'). But one cannot avoid the feeling that those with a bank-balance will be all right while those without one will probably remain on the happy-go-lucky fringes—happy if they are lucky and lucky if they are happy.

Being driven from 'Vow Cave' this year, as I now always am, by the summer crowds that throng Lamorna, I was glad enough to accept when Barney offered me his caravan as a refuge. Accordingly in June month I found myself installed there, interested to try out this type of accommodation since I had some thoughts of buying a caravan to take the place of

'Vow Cave.' But it seems that one could never find one with enough space for a painter's needs; even a writer tends to feel cramped, the low ceiling is oppressive and the thin walls make it almost impossible to maintain an even temperature. Nights are acutely cold, but as soon as the morning sun strikes the roof one is reduced to a comatose state of being baked in a slow oven. Ventilation without draughts is difficult to achieve, and windows tend to be set too low for a pleasant prospect.

One day we made an expedition to the Lizard, slowing down at a gate to an avenue near Ruan Minor, outside which was a wooden notice-board inscribed 'Hygenical Camping Ground' in an amateurish script. We had arrived at John Müller's Biological Dynamic Research Station, and its director, in straw hat and shirt sleeves, with woollen pants showing below turned-up trousers, was mowing one of the lawns. An attractive young girl was handling a rake near by.

We were shown round the garden, so neat and orderly that it seemed like a strip of Holland transported to Cornwall. The director had, after more than twenty years' work, managed to desiccate—he would probably say 'disinfect'—this plot of earth so that all its Celtic weirdness had evaporated, to be replaced by something very different. His method of cultivation was based on a compost devised by himself without manure or chemicals, but with the aid of undines, salamanders, sylphs and gnomes, as one of his leaflets describes.

We were invited to plunge our hands into the compost-heap and feel the heat of the fiery Element generated in the middle of it by the special vegetable activator. We admired the fruit and vegetables grown with it, and they were indeed admirable, except for some rather sickly marrow plants after whose health we inquired.

'Atomic radiation!' explained the Lizard Wizard.

He next called our attention to a system of trenches irrigated by jets of water strategically placed.

'We are going to have a dry summer,' he declared portentously. 'So, we prepare!'

I felt that it was in the script for me to ask, 'How do you know we are going to have a dry summer?' but I let it pass. A little later, 'We are going to have a dry summer,' he repeated. Definitely, I had missed my cue. (In fact, the succeeding months were rather wet).

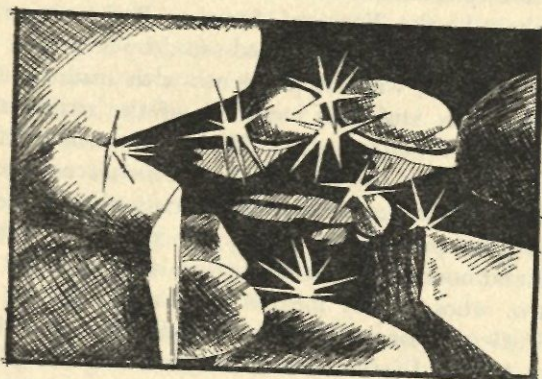
He took us to look at a crumbling stone pillar standing in another part of the garden, the only extant pre-Christian cross of serpentine, as he told us. The head was carved in low relief with a 'cross-saltire' or, as he called it, 'the cross of Atlantis.' The shaft was triangular in section with the flat face looking east and the angle-face pointing westward, as he said, directly to 'the Pipers' of Boleigh. He informed us that it was about thirty thousand years old, but I forget the exact figure he quoted. Dill, a herb of Mercury, had been planted round the base like pubic hair, this focal point being surrounded by a double square of stones, then further out by a circle and finally by a triangle. He admitted, rather endearingly, that there should have been two interlaced triangles, but it had proved too difficult to construct the second. This whole three-dimensional diagram or mandala was an epitome of the powers of Mercury in the Four Kingdoms. The stone itself represented the first or mineral kingdom, the dill-plant the vegetable, the old spaniel that waddled about the garden the animal and one of the workers living there, whose nature was mercurial, the human kingdom.

The Lizard peninsula is chiefly composed of serpentine and hornblende, with veins of soapstone. One such vein, we were told, extends underground from beneath this cross to Carnac in Brittany. Our informant has a knowledge of geological formations and can divine the position of water and minerals below the earth's surface with great accuracy, so it may be true about the soapstone. But when he went on to equate Carnac, not only with Karnac in Egypt, but with Kennack Sands a few miles away near Cadgwith, I began to wonder. The philology seemed a trifle strained; however, the spelling of the name 'Castle Canyke' outside Bodmin is very various, including Car-

PERIPHERAL

nedd, Kynock, Cannick and Kerneck, so I must leave the question to specialists.

An associate who used sometimes to take the chair at Barney's meetings worked out some astrological charts before settling in Mousehole. These indicated an immense funnel through which strange forces were pouring down into Cornwall's horn. Astrology seems to be right.



FOOD-LORE

There's pasties and cream
Tin in the stream,
Pilchards and herrings
They sparkle and gleam;
Though we may roam
Cornwall's our home
The beautiful county of Cornwall!

Though surely it should be 'country' instead of 'county?' I was told this jingle in the 'Farmers' Arms' at Penzance, to which I was taken one evening to drink 'red-tops,' by a 'proper Cornish' woman, Betty Cock, who supplied me with traditional recipes for Cornish dishes and told me some of the usages that once accompanied their consumption. Mrs. Cock, who was born at Newquay, remembers the droves of ponies that used to be sold each year at Summercourt Fair on the twenty-ninth of September. Michaelmas here provides a link in the connection between the Archangel and horses in addition to that of St. Michael Penkeval near Truro, whose name means 'horse's head.' And was not he, with St. George, one of the two Naked Horsemen who appear—whether Aqvins, Dioscuri, 'Sons of Thunder' or twin-saints—as river-gods or rescuers, healers or bearers of arms?

Mrs. Cock was staying awhile with two of her children in an outhouse on Eric Barnes' holding while I was at Barney's caravan. She had hoped to take a short camping holiday between jobs, but the weather was too unkind for her to enjoy sleeping under canvas, so they dosed down in a disused stable instead. Before they arrived, I helped Barney and Mary to furnish this makeshift lodging with a camp-bed and a wicker reclining chair, a lantern and one or two packing-cases. There they settled in happily enough, eating from tins off an improvised dressing-table, Betty's gay summer clothes and streamlined radio contrasting oddly with the bare walls and floor of beaten earth.

They had brought all their possessions with them (even to a bird-cage which hung empty from the rafters) in several trunks and suit-cases; they cooked on a Primus stove, washed in the communal water-shute and (I suppose) used a bank of nettles in the stableyard for the 'calls of nature' since there was no other lavatory.

One day, having sent her obstreperous children off to play by the fountain, Betty came and talked to me in the caravan. She gave me this recipe for 'Cornish Broth,' which does not seem very different from 'Irish Stew':

You roll meat in a saucepan with a little water, adding sliced onions, turnips, carrots and flatpol cabbage. Make a suet-pudding separately in a cloth from old potatoes grated raw and flour, and add this to the broth. Drink the liquid first from a basin, and eat the solid parts afterwards.

For 'Dry Fish,' which is salted cod, soak in cold water for two or three hours and boil slowly for ten minutes; then eat with potatoes and butter.

'Potato-cake' is made by boiling old potatoes, mashing them in a bowl and adding chopped suet, flour and a pinch of salt to make a dough. This is rolled flat and baked until brown, and may be eaten hot or cold.

The famous 'Heavy Cake' is made from a dough of flour, lard, salt and sugar moistened with milk or cream; dried fruit is added and the mixture rolled and baked until brown. Though it is literally 'heavy,' the origin of the name is in 'Heva' or 'Hewer,' the look-out man who watched the coast for the first sign of a pilchard-shoal, meanwhile sustaining himself with the cake during his long hours of waiting.

Mrs. Mayne, another informant, who was born at Goldsithney but has lived at Lamorna for a number of years, told me in addition that the Cornish had cherished this recipe since Biblical times and that it was the original unleavened bread. The cake should be scored with a criss-cross pattern of lines before it is put in the oven; commercial bakeries barely scratch the surface, the resulting marks being a mere residue of the original inten-

tion. But the lines should be cut almost half way through the substance so that a section may be broken off easily with the fingers. Bread should always be broken; it is bad manners to cut it with a knife. This is probably another sign of the respect for bread as the body of Christ which is still to be found, more or less latent, all over Europe; many country people would think it wicked to burn crusts however dry or mouldy; and in Spain, if you drop a piece on the floor you must pick it up and kiss it.

If you want a real 'Cornish Pasty,' take a section of your pastry by cutting round a large dinner-plate, having previously chopped up onions, potatoes, turnips and meat (preferably steak). Sprinkle these with salt and pepper, and enclose them raw, together with a knob of butter or margarine by folding the circle of pastry over them. Squeeze the edges together so that you have a more or less semi-circular 'turnover,' make a small hole in the top and bake for three-quarters of an hour to an hour. The filling must be put in raw so that the juices are absorbed by the pastry; this is the traditional dinner taken with them to work by farmers and tinmen. (The *crowst*, now used for any kind of snack, was originally the workman's splits and unsweetened tea taken at the mid-morning and mid-afternoon breaks). Few shop-made pasties are now prepared carefully—their dry shell usually encloses but scraps of tasteless vegetables and some gristly knobs of horse meat.

'Curranty'- or 'Figgy-Oggin' is like a jam roll but with currants or 'figs'—these are raisins or sultanas—instead of jam, the roll of dough being made with milk, tied in a cloth and then baked. This was a favourite for Sunday dinner when the parish-feast was celebrated, the 'Feasen Tea' of the day before being incomplete without 'Saffron Cake.' The saffron used was made from the dried stamens of a species of crocus growing in Spain, which may also be employed as a dye for fabrics. 'As dear as saffron' used to be a proverb. For confectionery, it should first be shredded and warmed; then boiling water should be poured over it and allowed to stand over-night. Yeast, sugar

and warm water should be mixed separately and warmed to blood-heat, and the saffron re-warmed. Plain flour, washed currants, lard, salt, sugar, grated nut-meg or cinnamon and lemon-peel should be made into a dough, and the yeast-mixture and the saffron water added alternately. It is important that everything should be kept warm during the work. When the dough is in the pan it must be covered with greaseproof paper, a towel placed over this again and left till the dough rises to the top of the pan, which it should do in about three hours. It should be shaped into buns or put into a cake-tin and baked for a quarter of an hour.

'Cornish Cream' is another dainty which is not always properly prepared by a commercial dairy, the farm house method being as follows: The milk should stand in a large shallow pan for two or three hours before it is scalded; this should be done in the same pan, which must then be set aside in a cold place without shaking it. The 'skim' of the cream should be removed and the rest eaten—traditionally, with pasties, as yoghourt is eaten with meat-dishes in Balkan countries. Cornish people are said to have been taught the art of cream-making by St. Bride, the dairies' patroness, but Devonshire people only by the pixies. Devon-dwellers are despised by the Cornish, who rudely declare that they grew from the germs thrown out of Cornwall with dirty water into the Tamar.

For 'Pickled Apples,' the small hard fruit called the 'box apple' must be used; these are put into a 'busser'—an earthenware container—and vinegar boiled with pickling-spices is poured over them, covered and left to stand for a month.

Mrs. Mayne told me that in her grandmother's day pilchards were never eaten with fish-knives and forks but with the fingers; a small piece at a time had to be broken off with the thumb and forefinger of the right hand. Each person at table would be provided with a finger bowl and a tiny napkin; ceremony was used when eating the pilchard because it was the fish used to feed the Five Thousand in the Gospel story. Marinated pilchards have long been a favourite dish in Cornwall; the fish should be

scraped, put in a fireproof dish and sprinkled with mixed spice. Bay leaves should be laid over them and the dish filled with vinegar, covered with grease-proof paper and baked in a slow oven for two or three hours.

Besides the parish-feast, many annual occasions were celebrated with special fare, and some still are so. On Shrove Tuesday (Col Perre's Day) and Good Friday, shell fish or 'trig meat' was sought and eaten. I have watched the islanders of St. Martin in the Scillies bent over their gleaming sands at low tide on a Good Friday morning. On the same day the people of Goldsithney preferred to implore abundance by planting parsley; while the Sunday before, simnel-cake had been eaten almost everywhere to the same end. Shrove Tuesday still brings to some tables a pancake made of the world-egg—symbolically to be eaten again, but boiled, at Easter in jubilation at the return of life. All these dates depending back from Easter hang upon the Paschal moon, yet hovering as they do about the vernal equinox, belong also to the sun's yearly progress.

Hall Monday, the day before Shrove Tuesday, was known as 'Peasen Monday' because pea-soup was eaten for dinner. This was the famous 'Nicky Nan Night,' a time of freedom for children, when they could express their high spirits uncurbed. Miss Ada Williams, of the Penzance Old Cornwall Society, remembers a time when gates and doors were lifted off their hinges in Crowlas, her native village, sometimes to be carried a distance away. This emblematic rape has only died out—if indeed it has died—within the last five years or so. When I first came to 'Vow Cave' I was several times annoyed to find, on my return there in early spring, the wooden gate to its enclosure lying in the lane or half hidden in an overgrown pit. My gate was not the only one to be so unhinged; but had I then recognised this nuisance as the remnant of an immemorial rite I should have felt less resentful.

It is not only sun-worship which is thus perpetuated by Nicky Nan for as the name suggests, a strain of water-worship coalesces with it. A well at Colan near Newquay was dedicated to 'Our

FOOD-LORE

Lady Nant'—Nanto Svelta, 'White Lady' or water-nix—and at Lamorna it may be the genius of the stream to whom we owe this survival. From time to time she claims a victim: once, long ago, an old woman, and more recently, a child:

I flung me round him
I drew him under;
I clung, I drowned him
My own white wonder.

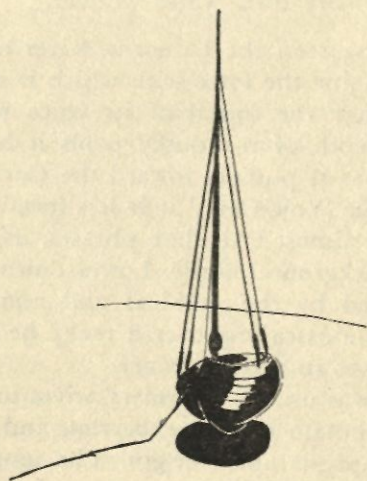
Visitors who have seen the Lamorna River only at summer's height cannot imagine the force with which it swirls down after a winter storm, nor the sound of its voice when 'crying for blood,' nor the depth of the dusky pools it hollows from the narrowing ravine as it plunges toward the Cove.

As it flows beside 'Vow Cave,' it is less formidable; that voice of many tones, of almost articulate phrases, usually makes here but a soothing background music. Lower down the valley, after it has been joined by the mill-leat and another stream, the rush of their triple cascading over a rocky bed so numbs one's ears that one moves in a light trance.

At one time it was usual for farmers' wives to brew wine from plums, parsnips, potatoes or blackberries, and make their own elder-flower champagne and sloe-gin. The usages of hospitality were formerly observed with greater care than they are to-day; when passers-by were few one had, in honour bound, to offer any stranger who called, something to eat or drink. It would hardly be possible to do this now, particularly in the summer season. It used to be said that if one accompanied one's guest on his way for a little while and noticed that he cast no shadow behind him, one would know that one had entertained a being from another world. Perhaps this, too, once happened more frequently than it does now, ghosts, gods or angels being refreshed with saffron-cake and blackberry-wine. Some Baucis and Philemon in a granite cottage may have played hosts to the gods' herald, sheltered a daughter-questing Demeter or employed an Apollo who sought a 'cattle-fold of the sun.'

THE LIVING STONES

Many kitchen-superstitions were once observed: two knives crossed while laying a table boded argument; and no knife must be left with edge uppermost or the angels might cut their feet. If you break a piece of crockery—as I was told by Mrs. Jelbert, who comes in to give 'Vow Cave' the cleaning I never have time for—you must at once break a spent match-stick into three, in



order to ward off a recurrence of the mishap. A hole within a cake or bread foretold a death; but a small potato carried about the person would absorb all the evil humours of the body, and so prevent rheumatism. This latter idea cannot be peculiar to Cornwall—my father always carried such a withered tuber in his pocket, claiming that without it he would be crippled. A sty on the eye must be crossed seven times with a cat's tail or with someone else's wedding ring; while a wart could be cured by stealing a piece of raw beef, crossing the wart with it and burying it; as it rotted the wart would vanish away.

FOOD-LORE

Perhaps I should add that I have not myself tested any of these recipes; living as I do mainly on fruit, vegetables and dairy produce, which need the minimum of cooking or none at all, I seldom eat puddings, cakes, pastry or highly-spiced dishes. I have never made a cake in my life—is this a record? I simply give the instructions as they were given to me, so that anyone who is interested may use them. But one day I must try out some of the charm-cures; I have always found that a burnt finger applied to the lobe of the ear is healed immediately.

GERMOE'S WELLS

Another day I set out through the steep field below the caravan, touched Pengersick and then turned right till I struck the main route that runs between Penzance and Helston. The two dogs were with me, and I had to hold them back and wait for a momentary pause in the stream of traffic; then dash across with them at the first opportunity.

Opposite was a turning sign-posted 'To the Ancient Church of St. Germoe and St. Germoe's Chair, $\frac{1}{4}$ mile.' From the inch-to-a-mile Ordnance Map, it looks as though St. Germoe's Well should be found on the left of this lane before you reach the village, but the site is so vaguely indicated that it is impossible to judge exactly where it is. According to H. R. Coulthard's *The Story of an Ancient Parish*, there was also in former times a carn of stones at the end of Germoe Lane, but at which end is not indicated. My own intuition suggests the end nearer the sea, perhaps approximately where the signpost now stands; but wherever it was, some benighted local authority demolished it long ago. The spot was connected with the legendary visit of St. Just (from Penwith) to his cousin St. Keverne (at the Lizard) who possessed a valuable chalice and paten. These were stolen by the departing guest and the stones with which his indignant host bombarded him formed the carn. A *Life of St. Patrick* describes these stolen vessels as 'a treasure of holy things, the plunder of the most holy places of the world,' and in view of such language one cannot help suspecting a link with another tradition, cup and dish being two of the Graal-hallows.

The square-towered church of Germoe, like that of St. Levan, is hidden till the last minute; then it comes suddenly into view, rising silver-grey from a hollow. Like St. Levan, too, the churchyard is approached by a sunken stile of granite slabs, the spaces between them barring the entry of cattle.

Before crossing this stile, one crosses the stream by a single

massive panel of slate. Within the churchyard, I was at once attracted to the 'Chair,' a triple seat divided by granite pillars and topped by a canopy with two arches that may once have covered the Saint's well. There is a fascination about this tiny structure built into the graveyard wall, its roof thickly grown with ivy, which may in part be due to the fact that it has no obvious utility. Suggestions have been made that it was a booth from which bread and arms were distributed during the Palm Sunday procession—echo, perhaps, of the Feast of Tabernacles; or it may be a materialisation of St. Germochus' own 'seat,' his cathedra of authority.

In any case, one can hardly imagine that Germochus himself ever sat in it, for if the hagiologists are right, he arrived from Munster by way of the Hayle estuary and took up residence in these parts about A.D. 500, whereas the present Chair dates from the fifteenth century. He was a member of that famous expedition of Irish 'saints,' reputed to number seven hundred and seventy-seven including Gwithian, Levan and Wendron, who all three left their names to parishes—not to mention St. Cruenna of Crowan, St. Moran of Madron, St. Ia of St. Ives and St. Breaca of Breage. Many of them are supposed to have been related. St. Levan, whose name has been corrupted from Selavan—which in its turn may be a corruption of Sylvanus, with what happy hints of Pan-influence!—was Breaca's brother; so was Germochus, though Latinised versions of his name probably give little idea of its Irish original. Indeed, the whole party may have been a sept or clan, all the members being more or less distantly related; and it is tempting to draw a parallel with the hereditary Moslem 'Saints' who inhabit the Sind Desert to this day.

Other stories say that Germoe was Breaca's nephew or cousin; but I prefer them as brother and sister, a kind of Dianus and Diana, blue-robed divinities of water and the moon. Tradition even relates that Breaca was a midwife, a Celtic Diana Lucina; that she came from a convent founded by St. Brigid of Kildare, who is still appealed to in the Hebrides as Bride, the divine

sage femme. Breaca's name suggests that she may even have been, in popular imagination, an avatar of Brigid herself.

The Irish company may have had mixed motives for their journey; but proseletysing could hardly have been a primary one, since Britain had been Christian already for three centuries. But the ancient Celtic Church had fallen on evil days through the marauding Saxons, and one of the Irishmen's aims may have been its revitalisation. Christianity here, in common with other countries was and has largely remained, the veriest veneer. The advance of the band was resisted by the Cornish King Teudar who, though not the bloodthirsty heathen he has sometimes been represented, certainly liquidated a number of them. However, Germoe and Breaca among others survived to establish their own sanctuaries.

The village with its one shop at the Post Office had a sweet and peaceful air, making it difficult to credit the old rhyme

Camborne men are bull dogs
Breage men are brags,
Germoe men can skat 'un all to rags.

Many Cornish villages have earned for their parish a nickname which takes the form of an animal-totem like Wendron goats, Mullion gulls, Madron bulls, St. Agnes cuckoos, St. Anthony pigs, Mawgan owls and St. Keverne buccas. The last is in a different category from the others in that a bucca is not an animal but a species of Cornish fairy. Unlike the pisky, who frequents the surface of the ground and the knocker, who is a 'swart fairy of the mine,' he is amphibious, with something in common with the Gaelic kelpie. Within living memory, offerings of fish were made to the buccas on a certain stone at the top of Newlyn hill. Why St. Keverne people should have adopted them as their totem I cannot guess.

Germoe too had its *pobel vean*, and Bal Lane, that leads from the village up to the hamlet of Balwest below Tregonning Hill, used to be one of their favourite sites for a dance or a fair. Personally, I did not feel an 'airy' quality about this lane

—much less than in parts of the stream valley below, which I explored later in the day, when I began to hunt seriously for the well. Not finding it, I inquired of a passing farmer if he knew where it was. He pointed to a bank of nettles just below the churchyard, but said there was nothing to be seen of it at this season.

'I suppose it's visible when the vegetation has died down,' I said.

'Yes, there's water in it through the winter,' he replied slowly, adding, 'There's another, what we call the Old Well, over in the Bottoms.' He gestured vaguely towards the west.

'How far's that, about half a mile?' I asked.

He nodded, looking down at the ground; he seemed disinclined to go into further detail, and so wandered away. I was puzzled by his manner until I read the diaries of Mrs. Thornley, describing her Well-Quest, for in one of them she notes how country people are sometimes ashamed of having forgotten or neglected their holy places. I rather feel, though, that their reluctance is due to diffidence in showing them to a stranger, who may not sympathise with the age-long cult.

Nettles never deter me; I must have been stung so often that I am immune. Even if I am not wearing the jeans—and they are by far the most comfortable, not to mention the most decent wear for country scrambling—I still disregard the venom and its effect soon passes off; or the old fashioned cure of the dock leaf always seems to grow handy. I now climbed the nettle grown bank and poked about but could see no trace of a structure and no flow but that of the stream itself, so I gave up the search and set off to look for the Old Well instead.

The stream flowed westward, and following it was a bridle path, much overgrown with weed, which forked by the beautiful little house and garden of Bosinney. Beyond a stone stile the track became completely grass covered, but for a short distance widened out to something like an 'old straight track' and impressed me with the sense of a *via sacra*. On either side grew stunted elms, giving it the appearance of an avenue. Leaving

a cottage-homestead on the left, with ducks, chickens and a single cow feeding in its meadow, the path continued over two or three fields, keeping beside the hedge though the stream had, somewhere unnoticed, turned aside. Then it joined a lane, which I crossed. I had not been looking carefully for the Old Well, thinking that it must be some distance further on; but now I was in a wide field with almost a downland air, which could hardly be described as 'the Bottoms.' Here a single contorted thorn tree grew out of a heap of stones, and so magically were its branches twisted and bent by the western wind that it seemed the epitome of a holy thorn. But no well was sunk beneath it.

The path petered out, as so often happens, and I had to climb a hedge before I could pick it up again. It was marked as uninterrupted on the map, but it may have been broken or diverted by a curmudgeonly farmer. I was still looking for 'the Bottoms' and could see trees grouping themselves deceptively ahead as though massed together into a copse beside the stream. But when I approached they thinned out to nothing but a hedgerow; and as I followed the stream on and on I despaired at last of locating the place. Crossing another lane and going through several more fields, I reached the village of Millpool with its peaceful green. I had not found either well or woodland; I could see the stream winding on and on as the valley sank lower towards its destination in the Hayle River, where perhaps there was some considerable group of trees. But this was more than half a mile.

I returned by another lane to the main road for a cup of tea, and asked the old lady who served me about St. Germoe's well, then about the Old Well. From what she said I realised that I must have gone too far from the church—the Old Well lay only a field and a half beyond the cottage in the green lane; and I determined to go back and find it later.

'We used to call that well "the Tide,"' she told me. 'The old people used to go to it rather than drink the village water. Then further on, there's another called the "Boiling Well"'

which never runs dry; the Fire Service people fill their tanks from it even now. But, of course, it's not boiling water!

'It bubbles up, I suppose,' I said.

I told her of my walk to Millpool, and gathered from her comments that if I had gone only a few steps further I should have found the Boiling Well.

'Did you walk all that way across fields?' she exclaimed. 'Aren't you afraid of meeting bullocks?' (She pronounced the first syllable of the word in the Cornish way, rhyming to 'gull'; 'bullocks' in Cornwall is a generic term and may be applied to bulls, steers, heifers or milking-cows).

'Well but if I had,' I answered, 'I would have found a way round where they were.'

'I've lived all my life in the country,' she declared, 'but I wouldn't like to walk alone through the fields.'

What atavistic terrors still deter people from safe and harmless pleasures!

In her manner of referring to 'the Tide' I had detected a reserve which made me hesitate to ask her why the old people resorted to it. After all, it must be some way from most of the houses, where water was no doubt more handily come by. Was it only that the well-water tasted sweeter, as it often does? or was it an ancient spring of healing properties, not to be exposed to the scoffer but reserved for the few who would cultivate its hidden guardian? This was an all-but-unknown source, celebrated only to those of the hamlet next which it lay—nameless, almost without a dedication, for St. Germoe's official well was the spring choked with nettles. From the guide booklet to the church by K. Y. Ashwell I learned why it had become elusive: its coping stones were removed and used in building an unattractive structure with a tap which I had noticed near the parish hall at the bottom of Bal Lane. The road-level was also raised at the beginning of this century and the well itself covered in, so a much greater depth of water is now necessary before it can flow out. Such was the too frequent ill-treatment of baptismal wells which had been used by the Celtic Church

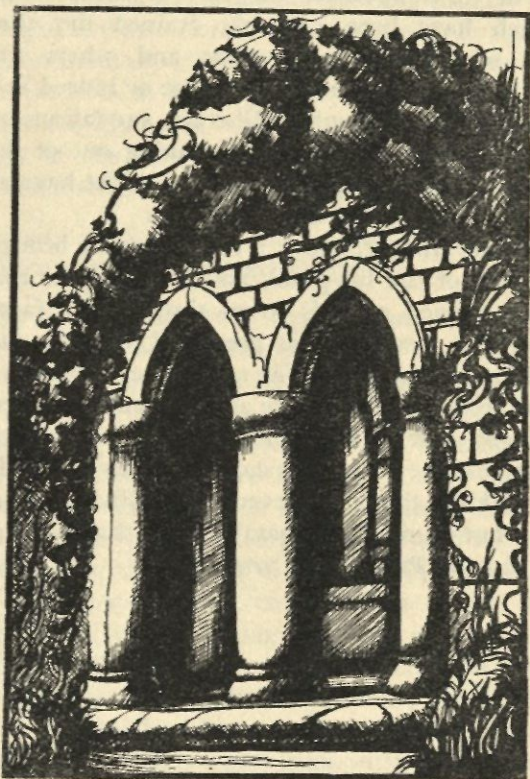
in Britain before an indoor font replaced them; and in this respect Wales has been as remiss as Cornwall.

Some days later I found the Tide by going through a broken gate a little off the path, just beyond the cottage. It was hidden in a tiny thicket where four fields met, the water gliding silently from beneath a deep bank of stones to meet the stream at right angles. I knew that it was still in use to-day, for a plastic cup hung on a nail driven into the thorn tree that shaded it. From this I drank; I always drink from an ancient well, whether dedicated to fairies or a saint, romance or healing, desires or holiness. I also bathed my eyes with the water than ran over long weeds like hair, for many wells have curative properties for the sight; it may have been fancy, but it seemed that afterwards I saw more clearly. The voice of this unnoticed spring seemed to murmur, Before St. Germoe was, I am. The Old Well, the Tide; nothing to do with the sea, the woman had assured me; I had asked her this, for I remembered tales of fresh water turning brackish at a high spring tide. Then to what mysterious surge did its name call attention? No saint, no god; further back than either, it recalled some ageless rhythm, an enduring ebb and flow. Was there a hint here of the moon as 'governess of floods? Vestiges of moon-worship may linger in its rites; drunk at the new or the full, its water may have special qualities; its touch at waxing may differ in virtue from drops splashed at the wane.

Another day I sought out the Boiling Well, approaching Millpool from the road that leads up from Praa Sands. As on my previous visit, I took the lane to the right of the large poultry farm with the lily-pond in front of it, but continued further up. I noticed a stone stile leading to fields on the left and wondered, from some hint in the look of their overgrown hedges, whether this might not lead to it. But I had been told to look for it by the wayside, so went on, leaving Millpool behind. Soon I met a middle-aged workman on a bicycle and called to him, asking where it was. He dismounted and made me retrace my steps, promising to show me the way.

GERMOE'S WELLS

'It's over there by the little bungalow,' he said, pointing to the fields approached by the stile—intuition was justified. 'My aunt used to live there, and she always used to say she was the first person to drink from it.'



I crossed the field as he said, and passed the bungalow with its stream-riddled garden. There in the lane beyond, the water heaved itself up through a sandy bottom and spread out as a shallow pool. No stonework had been built around it; nothing

had been altered since the day—some fifty years ago, I suppose—when it first sprang up. The fascination of most wells is their extreme age; that, and the numinous aura that hangs around them from immemorial water worship. But this spring, quite new as it was, possessed its own attraction: perhaps it had broken forth to compensate the loss of those wells—all too many—which have been callously drained dry through the installation of modern conservancy, and others which have fallen, like St. Meryasek's near Camborne or indeed St. Germoe's nearby, into decay through deliberate vandalism or neglect. Its water was limpid and copious, running out of the pool to join the stream; and I hoped that it too might have already, or would soon attain, its invisible guardian.

Having drunk from it, I took a few steps that brought me out on the far side of the lily-pond, and followed the road toward St. Hilary. I turned off this to go through the farmsteads of Colenso for the weather was grey and blustery, and I felt disinclined for a longer walk. The track here was dank, shadowed by soughing trees full of violence and sadness; I hurried upward, relieved to get clear of the valley. How much primeval gloom can still lurk almost within earshot of a busy road! I managed to avoid walking there, however—it is little pleasure for a pedestrian—but found tracks parallel to it that took me back to Newtown and the Praa Sands turning.

TRACES OF KING ARTHUR

Though King Arthur has been adopted by Cornwall as a national hero, this is by no means the only locality with which he has a legendary association—his tracks may be followed from Edinburgh to the Land's End, and over the Channel to Brittany. Impossible as it is to identify with certainty the scene of any of his exploits, Cornwall has a good claim as the material counterpart of the visionary Logres. Except perhaps the seamoors of Somerset, it is in this sense the most promising

candidate for fame, to be heard in the song, in Caer
Pedryvan four times revolving.

Camelot or Camlan has been equated not only with Queen's Camel in Somerset, near which the 'castle' of South Cadbury is situated, but with Camelford here in North Cornwall.

A case has also been put forward in favour of a strip of coastal land lying west of Mousehole just beyond the sea crag called 'Merlin's Rock,' east of Lamorna Cove, with Castallack to the north and southward the sea. It contains three farmsteads—Kemyel Wartha (upper), Kemyel Crease (middle) and Kemyel Drea (town, being the nearest to Mousehole) through which the footpath to Lamorna passes, crossed by a stream of the same name; the croft-land stretching eastward above Carn Dhu to Kemyel Point is Kemyel Cliff. Above the cliffs on the other side of Lamorna Cove, the steading of Rosemodres perpetuates the name of Sir Modret by whom Arthur met his death.

These are not Penwith's only link with Arthur; the battle of Vellyndruchar in which he repulsed the Saxons was fought somewhere in this region. *Velyn*, variously spelt, is Cornish for a mill; and this one was worked that day by the blood of the slain. If you follow the small streamy valley up beyond Velan-sagia you can still find a 'Vellyndruchia Cottage.' Over towards Sennen, the immense stone called 'Table Mên' served King

Arthur and his Knights as a dining-table when they feasted to celebrate a victory over the Danes.

It has been suggested that the territory of King Rivalen, father of Tristan, corresponded roughly to the Hundred of Pydar in North Cornwall; that of King Mark, his uncle, to the Hundred of Powder—central South Cornwall, the only district anciently called 'Cornouaille'—and that of King Arthur to the Hundreds of Penwith and Kerrier.

But on the whole it is in the north that one finds most place names recalling Chivalric romance: certainly I would accept Dozmary Pool on Bodmin Moor in preference to the waters behind Looe Bar near Porthleven as the Lady of the Lake's abode. Pomparles Bridge over the River Brue in Somerset, the 'Pons Perilous' beyond Wearyall Hill, also claims the honour; but whatever of strangeness it may once have possessed has been dissipated by the all-too-familiar traffic passing over it from the factories of Street on the way to Bridgwater, Shepton Mallet or Wells. Except for a small barton to the west of it, Dozmary is yet a solitude; the air of its heathland banks is withdrawn, and the quality of its waters so steely that one can well imagine them as the provenance of the enchanted sword. Though the tarn is not 'bottomless,' it is filled from a hidden source; and I should hesitate to swim there even on the hottest day. Tintagel, as the legends concur, was the birthplace of Arthur and though most of them hint at mystery in his birth, they do not all make it clear that he was illegitimate. Like Cuchullain, Roland, Charlemagne and many others, he belongs among the Heroic Bastards, being the son of Igraine, wife of Gorlois, who through Merlin's arts mistook the Pendragon for her husband. Not far from Tintagel, in fact just outside Camelford, is Slaughter Bridge where Arthur fought his last battle, receiving from his own bastard a mortal wound.

It was on one of the rare summer days of 1956 that we set out for Tintagel, Barney driving Mary, Jessica and me in the ramshackle car lent him by Betty Cock. Our route went through Helston and Truro, but we did not linger there as we had a

long drive before us to the north coast. We never knew how the car would behave—it had been doing odd things lately. So we did not stop until we had passed St. Columb Major and were out upon the St. Breock Downs, looking for the only stone alignment in Cornwall. It is known, in common with many stone circles—however many slabs may compose them—as ‘the Nine Maidens.’ Here there actually were nine haggard monoliths, some recumbent, others standing upright and ashen against fresh bracken fronds. A sea-gull was perched on one of them, reminder that in this peninsula one is nowhere too far from the coast to see a gull, even in the finest weather. The alignment resembles several I have seen in the south of Ireland, but is not nearly so impressive as those petrified warriors of Carnac, particularly the stones of the Champ de Ménéec seem to retain a strange quality of movement and, by their relative size and spacing actually give one the impression of an armed company on the march.

Not a cloud dimmed the sun's clarity, though a keen breeze mitigated its warmth:

I crave,
An unbroken dream
A pure day, gay and free
Free from love, from zeal
From hate, from hope, from prayer.

After leaving the ‘Maidens’ we went to look for the boulder called ‘The Magi Stone,’ which according to the map, lay just beyond the rough boundary of the Nine Maidens moor. There were in fact several granite blocks cast like giants’ playthings among the heather, but we could not decide which of them was intended; nor have I been able to trace any story to account for the stone’s name. We were on a hill-crest and could look back towards St. Columb whence we had come, and forward to the widening mouth of the Camel river and the waveless blue of the sea; soon we were descending towards Wadebridge at the head of the estuary, where we lunched. There is no longer a trace of the

chapel dedicated to St. Michael which once stood at the near end of the fifteenth century bridge.

We now made for the hill-fort called the 'Kelly Rounds,' which we found by taking the lane marked by the unusual Three Holes Cross, a carved granite pillar by the side of the road. The fort is the ancient *Caelwic*, Latinised as 'Castle Killiburn,' the Celtic name having undergone much the same change as that from *Caladwylch* to 'Caliburn' or 'Excalibur.' *Caelwic* is a grass bank and ditch encircling an airy upland, now cut across by a modern track. However tenuous the connection of the place with Arthurian saga, an air of Chilvaric adventure seems to blow about it, making it seem the material stump of some Caer Arbenic or Sarras, some Graal-hiding city or temple or castle, whose element is so fine that we cannot apprehend the whole but grasp only an abraded residue.

The elevation was not extreme nor the approaches steep, but the site being widely open, offered a prospect all round. Eastward we could see the unbuttressed tower of St. Mabyn church rising from trees, with that of Helland beyond and a little to the south; the silhouette of Brown Willy and Row Tor, slate coloured in the distance, barred the northern horizon. Southward we saw the once-wild moorland of Hensbarrow dotted with pyramids of china-clay, though happily the Bronze-age barrow on its summit, untouched by the workings, was also plainly visible. To the west, the spike of St. Minver was pointing upwards but out of true, with the square of St. Endellion's tower beyond and to the north.

Was the orientation of these churches accidental, or are their ancient sites aligned on *Caelwic* to an equinoctial or solstitial date? South-west stretched away the St. Breock Downs, reminding us again of all the names which Cornwall holds in common with Brittany; for surely this one is a variant of *St. Brieuc*, and there are many more. *Dumnonia* itself is paralled by *Domnonia*, Cornwall by *Cornouaille* in Finisterre which even boasts a dedication to *St. Berrier*, none other than our own Berriana or Buryan. The little village of Cornelly near Truro recalls *St.*

Cornély of Carnae who long ago took over the attributes of the Horned God, showerer of blessing on flocks and herds; and *Carhaix* repeats St. Michael Carhayes.

Having circumambulated the rampart, we returned to the car and went on to St. Kew, whose winding road intersects the stream that flows through the village. We looked at the church and particularly at the old stone cross in the graveyard but did not stay long, as we wanted to search for another Arthurian stronghold, Damelioc or 'Castle Terrible'; so we inquired of the friendly dark-eyed boys running about. One of them told us to make for Pendoggett and then to ask for 'Tregear Rounds.' This we did, and seeing a gate marked 'Tregear' we left the car by the road-side and went through. Climbing a particularly high and steep hedge round an almost circular field, we imagined we had found the place. Then a truck for telegraph-maintenance came bumping over the field towards us, so to make sure we asked the men driving it if this were 'the Rounds.' Glad to talk, they spread open a map with an enormous scale, telling us that the spot we wanted was 'ten poles down the road.' (Their work had accustomed them to measuring distance in this way.)

When found, Damelioc proved to be a 'castle' of very different character from Caelwic; though much more extensive, with a wider ditch and higher rampart, it was somehow shadowed and less impressive: situated on a hillside rather than a hill-top, it did not appear easy to defend. As we gazed down the north-facing slope across intervening valleys to the same blue moorland heights which we had seen from Caelwick, we could pick out remnants of the irregular circle by their growth of trees; the surrounding ditch, too, had become a tunnel under a dense growth of thorn-bushes and brambles. In spite of its traditional link with Igraine, there lingered here less Arthurian presence.

When we arrived at Tintagel, having passed through slatey Delabole, the first sight that caught our eyes was King Arthur's Hall. Part museum, part temple, part theatre, this strange building puzzled me; so I asked Mr. Blake, who was in charge of it, to tell me something of its origins.

It seems that the 'Fellowship of the Knights of the Round Table of King Arthur' was founded about 1922 by F. T. Glasscock, the Hall of Chivalry being completed at about the same date, and the larger King Arthur's Hall some eleven years later. After the founder's death in the following year, the Fellowship was gradually dispersed, though his widow kept the Halls in repair until her own death in 1947. The local Freemasons then bought the property in order to preserve the fabric and carry on as far as possible the founder's intention.

We found 'the Hall of Chivalry' to contain a replica of the Round Table (presumably based on that at Winchester), oak thrones for Arthur and Guinevere, the banners and shields of the Knights and some symbolic weapons. There was also a series of paintings in a debased Victorian academic style, illustrating incidents from Malory's narrative, by William Hatherall.

Beyond was the much larger King Arthur's Hall, built entirely of various Cornish stones, chiefly a greenish-grey polyphant and a brownish elvan found at Tintagel. The idea was interesting but the result rather dreary: in spite of there being no doors in the archways that led into the surrounding corridor, a sense of claustrophobia pervaded the huge gallery, the small windows placed high along its sides giving it the air of a dungeon. The stained-glass designs are said to be light at one end of the Hall and dark at the other; but I could notice no graduation of brilliance, the whole vault-like structure seeming filled with a lustreless twilight. The glass, designed by a Miss Whall, was aesthetically rather better than the paintings in the other Hall; but in the large windows at either end the figure-drawing was weak, the single objects or 'still-lives' in the side-windows being more successful. Shields of a heart-shape had been carved from a great variety of local stones, also graduated in colour and set in a dado round the walls. A local craftsman who was employed on this work once remarked that granite used to be carved with copper instruments, but the tempering of the metal to the needed strength is now a lost art. One end of the Hall was occupied by the Round Table and the two thrones on a dais below a canopy,

all of granite. This structure was surmounted by an unhewn block, still cloaked in lichen, with a representation of the Anvil and Sword which being drawn therefrom proclaimed Arthur king. This was the main 'set' for the ceremonies, curtains draped from the roof being used to enlarge or curtail the space as required. At the opposite end of the Hall a choice if restricted library of books dealing with Arthurian subjects was kept for the use of students.

In the absence of any note as to who was responsible for the architecture, I assumed that it was Mr. Glasscock himself. Certainly he published several works from this address, among them, in 1931, a 'play in four acts and a prologue' called *King Arthur and the Twofold Quest*. Written in the blankest of blank verse it is, I should guess, as unactable as it is unreadable; and the author's interpretation of his material shows a spiritual perception no keener than his sense of literary style. Deaf to the hints of primeval hallows which echo through the theme, he reduces it to a moralistic allegory, a mere 'polite' version of the Graal-legend which, skimming over all archaic depths, fails to search out the archetypes from which its emblems are derived. The play was devised for performance in the Hall, no less than the Hall being designed as a setting for the play: here was a grand idea but alas! good intentions are not enough. A Wagnerian genius might have materialised this one, but although expense seems to have been no object, Mr. Glasscock did not possess the other necessary qualifications.

Nevertheless, he and his associates explored at least one fascinating aspect of Arthuriana with pictorially attractive results, this being the designing and reproduction of the shields of all the Knights mentioned in the *Morte d'Arthur*. Sir Lancelot's three lions passant or on a field azure, Sir Galahad's calvary-cross gules on a field argent, King Arthur's own dragon rampant gules on a field or—insignia of the Pendragon—here come before one and more vividly than they do in Malory's text, from which it would be a tedious task to disenter them. The gay prints call attention to the esoteric meaning of heraldic form and

colour, and the star-symbolism at its basis, the colours corresponding to those assigned to the astrological planets. And does not the coven-number of thirteen denote, aside from the thirteen lunations, the Sun regent and his twelve Zodiacal paladins?

This lore must be recorded in its clarity and sealed up elsewhere; Malory heard something of it without understanding what he heard, and enveloped it in a diffuse fog of irrelevancy through which one has to grope for the treasures of meaning as though they were the Sangraal itself. Many have done so; there have been attempts to relate the sign-language of the Taro with that of Chivalric romance; and doubtless analogies with Jungian thought could profitably be sought also.

But on this day of immediate sunlight we were glad to leave the Halls and make our way by the foot-path down the ravine to Castle Cove where, starving hungry, we ate a huge tea at the Beach Café and looked across to the chasm called 'Merlin's Cave' which undercuts the island. Afterwards we climbed the steep pathways covered with shale that brought us to the Norman ruins still called 'Arthur's Castle.' Here the cliffs are table-lands, bare but for a close turf, which spread out immensely; then, suddenly cut short, drop into the sea with a forbidding wall. There is a particularly vertiginous view at a south-west window of the Castle's Upper Ward from which you look down sheer to a boulder-strewn shore. This is still the mainland; but to reach the island which is Tintagel Head, you have to climb down a precipitous rock-cut staircase and, having crossed a wooden gangway, up a similar ladder on the other side. Here we found ruins of another castle, and above, remains of a Celtic monastery. This is unique in England except for Lindisfarne which, like Scotland's Iona, was linked to similar foundations in Ireland and Wales. St. Juliot was Tintagel's Columba, and remains of his chapel and well, together with one or two graves lined with sheets of slate, can still be seen, though all was ruinous even before the days of the first Elizabeth. The name seems to be a Latinised form of Ilud, and in the neighbourhood are several wells dedicated to this saint—one in the

TRACES OF KING ARTHUR

Valency Valley has been allowed to go dry, but there is another near Camelford still flowing.

To me the atmosphere of the spectacular headland was less of St. Juliot or even of Arthur than of Tristan; and in the clarity of evening as the sea, deceptively smooth, stretched below us to offer a path for the sun of the year's almost-longest day, I could see that fateful ship with sails black as the approaching cliffs and rigged to give a lying message.



THE 'TROY-STONES'

So open and treeless are the surroundings of Tintagel that they remind one of St. Just-in-Penwith; there is the same wide prospect of sea, though at Tintagel, owing to the conformation of the coast one can pick up landmarks to a wider extent, from Trevoze Head to Hartland Point across the Devon border. The atmosphere resembles that of Cape Cornwall, for the same tingling magnetism reaches a terminal in each case. The current runs across England from Blythborough in Suffolk—another place of strong air and buffeting gusts, at its best in sunlight—to plunge into the sea, here and at the Cape. It reappears in the Scillies on the island of St. Helen's where a ruined chapel, but lately reclaimed from bracken, marks the spot; hence it dives again into the Atlantic, only emerging on the eastern coast of the United States. It crosses the continent to California, sinks again under water as it touches the Pacific, to regain land on the Eurasian continent, over which it passes to the Baltic and North Sea. Below these it vanishes till it surfaces again at Blythborough, having 'put a girdle round about the earth.'

This, at least, is its route according to the teaching of a hidden order whose existence and very name is known only to a few. Little can be said of it, since it is now withdrawn from human manifestation; it was, however, in the past the source of many mystico-military brotherhoods, giving a special sense to such paradoxical phrases as 'happy warrior' and 'holy war.' Islam learned much from it; Hinduism, except among the Sikhs, much less, drawing as it does strength from a source of more vegetative persistence. Further east, it was expressed through the Samurai; while through Christianity it put forth the Fellowship of the Round Table, Charlemagne and his Paladins, and the Order of Knights Templar. These had their precursors and counterparts in many pagan systems, the Red Branch and the Fianna Finn of ancient Ireland being examples from Europe. There is,

too, a connection with the pre-Christian Michael-force, wherever this is found.

I was first told of this order by a casual acquaintance whom I met on the island of St. Martin in the Scillies; and I later picked up the thread in St. Agnes. But the knowledge of earth's surface-currents does not belong to this order alone, being shared by many esoteric groups. One of these records in a recent script a sketch-map showing a similar latitudinal current that runs further south. Starting in Central Asia it crosses Persia, Arabia and Egypt, then touches some of the Mediterranean Islands and finally passes into the Atlantic by the Straits of Gibraltar for America, the Pacific and China. The map also shows a longitudinal current cutting the other at right angles in the Gibraltar region; rising at the North Pole, it touches the sacred isles of Iona and Himba on its way down the western coasts of Britain. It strikes the Land's End district, skirts the French coast off Finisterre and so on to Spain west of Gibraltar.

Because of this magnetic flow, I suppose, the places where the land unloads its charge into the ocean have an unburdened feeling; and where an earth-current meets a sea-current a whirl-pool develops which stimulates health and visionary capacity. But less than the whole district of Tintagel has this free and open air, and one can find pockets harbouring force of a very different kind. To the north, just past the hamlet of Bosinney, the road becomes tree lined and plunges with a steep declivity into Rocky Valley. To explore this, we left the car and opening a broken five-barred gate, followed a lane downhill to a farmhouse that had once been a mill. Above us, crags hung with verdure the colour of burnished brass were barely touched by the declining sun; and the damp and chill of evening had already risen from the valley-floor and hung among the boughs of its bosky thickets.

To our right, a spring oozed from beneath a rock, making a muddy puddle that spilled into the woodland in several streams. In a triangular meadow to our left a few horned sheep of a mountainy breed, newly shorn of their fleeces, shivered white

against the darkening grass. Two or three Muscovy ducks with their drake lurched about the track, the livid hue of nightmare in their wattles. They might have sidled from the pages of Audubon, whose drawings epitomise all that is sinister and repugnant in bird-morphology, celebrating its reluctance to make even that half-choice against primordial slime, and reviving its latent nostalgia for the reptilian state.

The others were not terrified of these huge ducks as I was; but Barney recalled how they used to be bred at Nancothan, another shadowed valley, and told how they would scratch like cats if unwilling to be handled. The short feathers stood out from the drake's neck, and hisses issued from his swollen bill; alone, I would have sought another way round, by-passing the farmyard; but with the others I hurried through it, trying not to see the horrible birds.

Directed by a woman whose chlorotic pallor was enhanced by the background of dank trees, we crossed a plank bridge over a brook and followed a path leading through undergrowth downwards towards the sea, a blue line of horizon visible at the valley's end.

Looking back from this horizon in Robert Hunt's day, one could still have seen the hermitage of St. Nectan; and in former times fishermen would prostrate themselves at the sound of his silver bell. Situated higher up the valley in the part called Trevillet, the other side of the road from the path we took, it was so well screened by bushes that it was easier to pick out from the sea than to find on land. Whether any trace of the Oratory yet remains I cannot tell, for we had no time to explore beyond the road.

The name of the presiding genius—'saint' or 'king'—is given as Nectan or Knighton, but R. S. Hawker's ballad about the place is entitled *The Sisters of Glen-Neot*, thus linking it with the pygmy-saint and brother of Athelstan. The basin into which the stream here drops is called 'St. Nectan's Kieve,' and here as he lay dying he threw his bell. But another story says that far from dying peacefully as a hermit, he suffered martyrdom at

THE 'TROY-STONES'

Stoke across the Devon border, where the church of Hartland Abbey was later built to house his relics. However this may be, after his death two mysterious ladies, poverty-stricken but of noble birth, took possession of his hermitage, having buried his coffin with its treasures under the waterfall. They spoke to no one, not having the Cornish language; and after a life of seclusion they too died without revealing the secret. The treasure was sought in the Kieve (though without success) even at lately as last century.

The stream splashed, now but a miniature cascade, into a pool darkened by the surrounding growth; we pressed on through breast-high ferns and soon reached the ruins of two cottages with their out-buildings. Their walls were hardly visible below the masses of ivy which draped them, and elder bushes, their sickly bloom scenting the air, filled cavities left by the absent roofs. One version of the Nectan-legend says that the strange women lived, not at the hermitage but in a cottage, and these abandoned hovels might well have served the recluses for home. The path wound between them; and there, facing them on the sheer slatey wall of the ravine, the immemorial maze-pattern had been incised.

I had heard of these as the 'Troy-Stones' and had visualised two separate blocks of granite, each somewhat resembling the Hollywood Stone from County Wicklow; but instead, two labyrinth patterns, each about fifteen inches high, had been cut in the one rocky face. They did not look ancient; or if they were, must surely have been re-cut in recent times; who knows, perhaps they are even yet used to instil the secrets of circle and cross? That, at least, is one function of the maze-pattern—to extend the arms, then turn them as on the fylfot and twist the decussations yet again till they produce the rose. Here this most ancient antinomy was resolved; not, as often, in the form of an allegorical flower nor in geometric diagram but, in spite of the intractable medium, by an image suggesting the fleshy and intestinal, perhaps allied to the art of the haruspex. I felt that this lore was brought by St. Nectan's successors, whose spirits

still lurk in wall and bush; a force which left its mark on any place where a maze has been constructed. These localities may often be traced by the fact that they bear the name of 'Troy'; such a labyrinth, called "Troy Town," has been cut in the turf and marked out with small blocks of granite on the wild southwestern coast of St. Agnes.

If one imagines that the *Iliad* no less than the *Ramayana* may conceal an inner sense, then the history of Troy itself may be allegorical. The Troy-town glyph has been found in many parts of the world, always with a cosmographic significance. The universe may be conceived as the abode of a transcendental being and the maze as a diagram of this abode. Pre-Christian in origin, it was adopted by Christianity with much else, and pilgrims would follow on their knees a maze-pattern let into the pavement of a church. Before this, the design also served as a map of the afterworld into which the soul entered at death; one version has seven revolutions, turning alternately to right and left, which recall the seven spheres of many systems. The dance called *The Walls of Troy* may once have shown how the paths of this afterworld were to be traversed.

Though ivy draped wall and tree-trunk with its lush leaves and elder bushes spread their plates of creamy florets all about, a blight seemed to have blown in from the direction of the sea and settled upon the leaves of ash and sycamore, turning them a rusty brown. Perhaps salt spray carried up the valley on a gale could have done this, but why was other vegetation unaffected?

On our return up the ravine we took a closer look at the farmhouse, part of which had been built at right angles to the main structure of the mill where the broken wheel, once turned by the stream, still remained hanging. The corner of this angle had been glazed in to trap whatever sunlight might fall between the abrupt sides of the gully, and indoor plants were pleasantly arrayed within. The other windows, though small, were daintily curtained, making a contrast to the general air of forbidding squalor.

THE 'TROY-STONES'

A granite mill-stone was leaning against the wall of an out-building and we peered over the half-door into the dim interior to watch the farmer as he sheared a Scottish ram. It was the only breed, he explained, that could be left out all winter on his cliff-pastures. The animal lay uncomplaining on the floor, its horns held in the man's left hand while his right wielded a pair of old-fashioned shears that might have been used for trimming a grass-edge. In one corner of the shed a bundle of oily fleeces had been stacked together, each one rolled up; and the farmer's hands were dark with their grease.

We asked if the sheep minded when they got a nip. This one had a close skin, he replied, so was easy to shear; but if the skin was loose he might cut it several times before the whole fleece would be disengaged. Even to this, according to his account, the sheep submitted patiently and without a cry.

After we had left him and reached the top of the lane, we looked back and saw the shorn ram dart out of the shed, stop and stamp a black foot, then leap the stone hedge that marked out the meadow and join his ewes.

My watch had stopped at seven o'clock, but we knew it must be much later than that; there was a long drive home before us, so we determined not to be led aside from a direct route, however much of interest there might be up side-turnings. We did not go through St. Kew again on our way back, though we might have been tempted to do so had we realised what had been happening at the Bodmin Quarter Sessions that day. They had witnessed the final hearing of a dramatic law-suit, the early stages of which we had followed with interest in the newspapers. The defendant was an elderly gypsy, Mrs. Harriet Sarah Richards, who had lived all her life in a tent, now pitched at Hendra outside the village of St. Kew; and we should certainly have wanted to call on her. But we did pass through the village of Whitecross which was stated in the local press to be the home of the plaintiff, a farmer, who had sued Mrs. Richards for obtaining money by false pretences; I noticed the place because of a small ancient stone by the wayside bearing a cross in low

relief painted white. However, a disclaimer was since published by the inhabitants of Whitecross, saying that the farmer is not one of them; and in fact his address was originally given as Penhale in the neighbourhood.

He alleged that Mrs. Richards claimed to be the seventh child of a seventh child and therefore possessed the power 'to work the planets,' and to vanquish the evil spirits which had been attacking him, together with his family and the farm. He had, in fact, experienced much ill-fortune; there had been serious losses on the farm, and his wife had given birth to a still-born child. The gypsy told him, he said, that all this bad luck was



the result of an enemy's 'ill-wishing'; so he had given her scores of fowls because she said she needed their gizzards to 'grease the planets'—presumably, so that these could turn in his favour. The farmer and his wife had parted with considerable sums of money, estimated at £600 in all, to the gypsy for her services in regard to the spirits, for removing the ill-wishing and for a 'magic carpet' which would grant them three wishes.

THE 'TROY-STONES'

Mrs. Richards may have had an eye to the main chance, but that is not to say she did not act in good faith. She probably believed that her clients actually were victims of the 'evil eye,' that her burning of herbs and incantations had saved the life of their second child, and that she had fought evil spirits, as she said, 'night and day' on their account. More sophisticated people than this aged Romany still believe disease to have a super-physical origin, and some forms of madness to be the result of demoniac possession. The farmer's wife may have been ignorant and gullible; asked what a 'planet' was, she said she thought it was 'something small that Mrs. Richards had on her table at home.' But there are people all over the world who think that the planets represent certain spheres of influence or types of force, and that these can be manipulated by those who know the way.

It would have been interesting to hear the actual case; press-reports are often misleading, the journalist's job being to edit his material in order to make a good 'story.' Gypsies are frequently at a disadvantage in a court of law; not only are many of them illiterate, as was this old lady; but living by their own immemorial customs, they are unfamiliar with those of the Gorgio. The members of the recently-formed Gypsy Lore Society with headquarters in Manchester University try to help gypsies if they are in trouble of any sort, particularly with the police, or if they are enduring persecution through ignorance of their rights. My sympathies tend to be with the Romanys whatever the legal aspect of the case; I feel they should be encouraged, since they are one of the few groups of people to withstand regimentation and lead a life of (at least comparative) freedom. (Needless to say, politicians' talk of 'liberty' is nothing but eye-wash). Anyone who resists the forces of standardisation is a public benefactor.

However, from what I heard of this particular old lady, she was well able to take care of herself; and the judge did not deal harshly with her, merely putting her on probation for a year and ordering her to pay £100 compensation to the farmer.

THE LIVING STONES

Her fourteen sons and daughters and her hundred grandchildren promptly rallied round and promised to raise this sum for her. No doubt many of them were in court, and it would have been fascinating to see them had we been able.

We had passed through Wadebridge again and left St. Breock Downs behind when we caught our last glimpse of the north-coast sea. Only half the globe of the sun was still visible as it slipped directly into the ocean; this seldom happens, for usually it sinks into a cloudy bank so that the moment of immersion is lost to sight. But if you can watch it submerge without haze, a green ray darts towards you across the water immediately after its disappearance. Alas, our route struck further inland, depriving us of this spectacle, so we were unable to verify the tale.

CROWLEY IN CORNWALL

As perhaps I have shown, folklore in Cornwall is not a thing of the past only but a living activity. Nor is it manifested only in more or less self-conscious revivals of ancient custom: where its remembrance has sunk below subliminal level, it is still only just below. In the collective unconscious, the mythopoeic faculty is busy yet; and given a good opportunity, will weave atavistic yarns about anyone whose personality promises to sustain them. If a 'black magician' had not been found in West Penwith fairly recently, somebody is sure to have invented one.

As often, fact played into the myth-makers' hands—in so far as, shortly before the war, the man whom the sensational press is still calling the 'wickedest man in the world' (though he died almost ten years ago) paid a visit to Mousehole. This was a gift to gossip, which flourishes like an exotic plant in the soft moist air; from rumours still current in the neighbourhood and even beyond, one would suppose that 'the Beast,' as Aleister Crowley indiscreetly styled himself, had made on several occasions a protracted stay. The accusations range widely in seriousness; some merely assert that he was a bad influence in the district; others, that he and his followers danced naked round the stone circle at Tregaseal; yet others, that he performed rites on the rocks about Trevelloe; that he revived Druidic cults involving human sacrifice and that his disciples in the locality still resort to this practice, kidnapping women for the purpose. (One or two mysteries of disappearance which the police failed to solve are 'explained' in this way). Not a word of factual evidence is brought forward in substantiation; how far those who spread such scandal are sincere, if deluded, it is hard to say. But it seems that a little fact-sifting would reduce both the volume and the virulence of the slanders.

I never met Crowley myself, but have read with interest some of his works and have taken the trouble to find out a few facts

in regard to his Cornish visit; and offer them here to balance against the many fictions.

There was only one visit and that a short one, lasting from the fourth till the fourteenth of August, 1938. Crowley stayed at the 'Lobster Pot,' Mousehole, for which he had nothing but praise; and passed his last night at a hotel in Penzance. For a 'black magician' it seems to have been a very plain and wholesome holiday, such as his numerous detractors must themselves often have spent.

The following is a fairly typical excerpt from his diary of the period:

Sun. 5. A perfectly glorious day. Designed Vau and Resh Atus. Greta to lunch. J.B.J. joined us; out to Morvah, after photographing at Paul. Rock-climbing again. Wooed Greta on cliffs. She is a comedian; will come one day and snatch. J.B.J. to dinner, talked Qabalah and Pythagoras. P.M. at 'the Dolphin,' Newlyn. Early to bed.

The days were occupied in sun- and sea-bathing, walking, rock-climbing and taking photographs; the evenings in pub-crawling, theatre-going and entertaining friends, male and female, to dinner; or possibly on occasion being entertained by them.

In the square red note-books which he had made especially for the purpose, it was his habit to record every magical work which he undertook, every supernormal incident that came to his notice, no matter whose reputation (his own not excepted) might suffer in the process. Whatever his demerits may have been, lack of candour was not one of them; and the journal, being strictly private, is often frank to the point of scurrility. All his 'opera,' as he termed his acts of 'magick,' were recorded; and if any had been performed during this visit they also would figure here. If he had resuscitated 'Druidic' sorceries he would have noted down the fact without hesitation. There is no hint that he tried to form an occult group in the region, nor that he carried out any magical ceremonies, whether involving blood-sacrifice or not. One can take it, therefore, that whatever he did

elsewhere and at other times, he did none of these things during his visit to Cornwall. If any of them have taken place here in modern times, their instigator was not Crowley. His diary records a full programme of amusement and relaxation; unless he falsified it—and there seems no motive for his so doing—it leaves little time for him to have done what the rumours allege.

During this brief spell the only work connected with occultism which he noted was the roughing-out of several designs for the Taro pack afterwards drawn according to his suggestions by Lady Harris. She, incidentally, still describes Crowley as the most wonderful man she ever met; this, one could not judge, I suppose, unless one knew him well. The nearest I came to meeting him was to see (and hear) him in Watkins' bookshop one day in the summer of 1937; and on that occasion I could only wonder at his reputation as a *déchireur de coeurs*.

I saw a squarely-built man of medium height who appeared to be in his middle sixties. His skin was the colour and texture of parchment, and thinning grey hair was scraped across the crown of his head; glasses (rimless or steel-rimmed) straddled his nose; features in no way remarkable were set in a long heavy face. People seem to have been puzzled by his eyes, having variously described them as 'black,' 'brown,' 'yellow,' 'green' and 'the colour of horn': to me they seemed none of these, but a transparent grey like water. My guess is that they were the kind of eyes whose pupil dilates and contracts with unusual rapidity, so that the tone and colour of the cornea appears to change with changing conditions, psychological as well as physical, depending as much on mood as on intensity of light. In some of Crowley's photographs the eyes look dark and opaque, in others clear; his whole face varies so much in different portraits, that it is difficult to recognise the same sitter in them all. Of those reproduced in John Symonds' biography *The Great Beast*, only two remind me of the man I saw—that on page 33, which shows him as a boy of fourteen, and that on page 209, posing as the sage Fo-Hi, when he must have been sixty-odd.

That day in the bookshop his dress was not particularly

eccentric, consisting of a suit of subfusc tweeds somewhat old-fashioned in cut, with knee-breeches that were not quite 'plus fours.' There was a ring of unusual design on one hand, but at this date I cannot recall its exact appearance. I think he carried some sort of shillelagh.

His voice has been very variously described—as 'cockney,' nasal, booming; perhaps this, too, changed with his mood and environment. That day it was an 'Oxford' voice (actually Cambridge in his case) with some of those affectations of tone which serve as a password among 'queers.' It was a stagey exhibitionistic voice; he made certain that everyone in the shop would hear everything he said, whether it concerned them or not.

There was no dramatic aura of evil surrounding the man; if I had not known who he was, I should have assessed him as a not-too-prosperous country-squire with a kink or two. But I did know who he was, at once—though exactly how, I cannot say. I did not need the bated-breath identification volunteered by the assistant after Crowley had left. He certainly made an impression on me, though I made none on him, sitting as I did mouse quiet with a book in a corner of that penumbral shop.

The only snatch of his conversation which I can now remember is his saying, in regard to a sensational trial then current, that he could not understand the public's morbid curiosity in wanting to see a murderer and shake hands with him. Fastidious distaste and contempt were mingled in the tone of his remarks.

The rumours in Cornwall—mainly propagated not by Cornish people, but by 'foreigners' who have settled in these parts—provide just one more example of the way in which sinister legend proliferated around this unfortunate man. He had only to spend ten days in the most ordinary holiday pursuits for his name to be linked with the locality in the darkest hints—linked, it seems, indissolubly, for the stories are still rife almost twenty years after his visit. That he cadged and sponged when short of money we know; that he did not feel himself bound by conventional sex-morality we know—he is not the only visitor, or even resident, to have felt thus; but that he was a murderer or

even an accessory we do not know, and unless proof is forthcoming such accusations should not be made. In point of fact, no criminal charge was ever brought against him in a court of law; and it surely would have been if he had actually done one quarter of what his vilifiers claim.

What we do know, since we have the evidence in his own writings, is that he was an indefatigable worker: he produced an enormous number of books, good (very good), bad and indifferent; he engaged in numerous experiments and researches into the workings of the mind; he studied voraciously and read voluminously at the same time leading an exceptionally vigorous, not to say exhausting, life on the physical plane. His detractors so seldom take the trouble to read the best of his works—say *Liber 777* or *The Book of Thoth*—that one feels they cannot wish to arrive at a balanced judgment. They only 'want to make your flesh creep'—and whom better to use to this end than 'Old Crow'? Most of them employ the term 'black magic' without clear definitions but merely to create a sensation, which seldom fails.

Not long since, a poetress was heard to remark at an artist's Private View that his work was 'steeped in black magic.' Needless to say, the painter's ignorance of this subject was only equalled by that of the poetess. The phrase is now so loosely, even flippantly, used that it has been for some time adopted as the trade-name for a popular brand of chocolates. 'Black magic' can mean almost anything one does not like (or ambivalently, something one likes but feels one ought not to like too much). In a serious discussion, therefore, it is important to define what one means by the phrase: a technical procedure of ritual magic may arguably be turned 'black' if it is malicious in intention, criminal as to the means employed or directed to commerce with malefic supernatural entities. In other words, it may be 'black' in motive, method or instrument.

Regarding the first head, certain smug theorists suggest that the motive need not be actively malicious, i.e., directed against the life or well-being of others, but need only be 'selfish' to be

classed as 'black.' If this were so, then much petitionary prayer for anything that one needs, from spiritual enlightenment to food, warmth and shelter would come into the same category. The only valid claim is that a 'black' rite or practice is one motivated by malice—the 'blackness' inhering in the intention rather than in the methods or materials used.

A superficially-convincing case can, however, be made out for classifying anything that involves pain and messiness as 'black.' Some authorities have included the whole apparatus of ritual magic as 'white' with the exception of blood-sacrifice, sex-rites, drug-illuminism and pacts. This holds good only at first sight, for they are concerned with method rather than motive. For example, sex-rites could be performed with beneficent intent: the pages of *The Golden Bough* and similar works teem with instances from primitive (and not so primitive) harvest-fields, to take only one of the usages described.

Again dependent on motive is the question of drug-illuminism, and those who condemn it are stressing method at motive's expense. Development through experiment with various substances has a venerable history, many cults having countenanced equivalents for the drinkers of Soma-juice. If such paths to the super-conscious can be used without ill effect, why should those who follow them be blamed? No one has stigmatised Aldous Huxley as a 'black magician' on account of his experiments with mescaline; but when Crowley made and recorded similar experiments more than forty years ago, he merely gave his detractors one more stick with which to beat the dog. Crowley claimed to have introduced *Anhalonium Lewinii* into Europe, having presumably been introduced to it himself during his Mexican wanderings at the beginning of the century, but there is no mention of this by Huxley in *The Doors of Perception*, where Crowley's pioneer-work is unacknowledged, though mention is made of researches by Jaensch, Havelock Ellis and Weir Mitchell.

Another school of thought maintains that any rite involving bloodshed is 'black,' and this question needs perhaps a fuller discussion than any of the foregoing topics, since it is this which

seems to haunt the popular imagination in Cornwall more persistently than the other three. The accusation is flung at Crowley in the confident expectation of a shocked response; yet almost every religion has demanded blood-sacrifice in one form or another, and some still do so. Does the magician, if he uses such rites, act more inhumanely than the sportsman, the butcher or the vivisector? Why are we complacent about the activities of these three pillars of society, yet shrink in horror if an isolated magician (crank, if you will) thinks he needs 'eye of newt and tongue of dog' for the due performance of some ceremony? It is merely that the aims of the former are considered socially acceptable at the present day—whatever may be done in their name—while those of the latter are not. But there is no occasion for smugness; what is socially acceptable to-day may be ostracised to-morrow, and vice versa. In any case, there are degrees of blood-sacrifice: the instantaneous dispatch of a victim is not in the same moral class as the infliction of its death by slow torture (vivisectors please note); nor is that of the fully-consenting victim in the same class as that of the victim helpless by reason of delicate physique, extreme youth or other cause.

This takes the subject a step further to the question of human sacrifice; examples of this not only occur in the Old Testament, but the idea is perpetuated symbolically by Christianity, derived as it is from Judaism and other contemporary cults such as Mithraism. Christian dogma transposes the animal-human elements of flesh and blood into the vegetable elements of bread and wine; then re-transposes them by the doctrine of Transubstantiation, giving them back their original essence. Nor can the civilisation based on Christianity claim to maintain itself without human victims; even apart from the holocausts of modern warfare, it seemingly cannot continue without stupendous casualties through death-on-the-roads. Industry, too, exacts its toll through high accident rate and occupational disease. How is it that we exonerate ourselves from these colossal inadvertencies, yet stand aghast at the report of one ritual-murder? If at a deep level we did not will slaughter, it could surely be

prevented; the morality which omits the unconscious is inadequate both for the present and the future. The difference between our human sacrifices and those, say, of the Aztec civilization is that we dispense with an accompanying gaudy ceremonial and a public holiday, pretending as we do that ours are unintentional. We sacrifice to Chance, as the ancients did to Choice; perhaps the character of a civilisation must depend on which it cultivates of these obscure cosmic twins.

Pacts come under the third head, dealing with the nature of the intermediary employed—in fact, of the type of supernatural being with whom they are made, always supposing they are made. Was not the covenant traditionally marked in the heavens by a rainbow and on earth by the *signum foederis sancti* of circumcision, a pact? Again, moral judgments need re-defining as regards the type of entity with which contact is achieved or attempted through ritual magic. What exactly is an 'evil spirit'? It is conceivable that an entity might be hostile to man, particularly if disturbed by his alien presence, without being intrinsically evil. It might have its own place and function in the cosmos, even though negative or dangerous to certain manifestations of human development. If 'evil' means no more than incompatible with these latter, then horrified disapproval is an exaggerated reaction. A more constructive attitude would consist in some attempt to gain knowledge of the best approach to such entities—one might almost say, a kind of praeternatural tact. If such entities exist, then humanity must share the same universe with them, and cannot afford merely to ignore or condemn them.

On the other hand, the whole apparatus of ritual magic—mantram, talisman, ceremony, words of power, contacts, trance, mediumship, seership, projection—may be used with either beneficent or malign intent; these are not necessarily 'white.'

Crowley is constantly accused of celebrating the Black Mass; whatever else he did, he could not have done this, not being a renegade priest. Other rituals—black, white, or khaki—he undoubtedly did perform (though not, it seems, in Cornwall) but

they were non-Christian rather than a burlesque of Christianity. If one is going to classify all non-Christian rites as black, one will find oneself in very deep water indeed. Basically, there is only one objection to ceremonial magic of whatever 'colour,' and Crowley himself stated it: by using the bounding outline of the circle, the magician asserts a dualism in the cosmos instead of affirming the unity of all being. Dualism implies opposition—attack and defence, fear and courage and the rest of the 'pairs of opposites.' Until this antinomy in the consciousness is resolved, by whatever means, there can be no apprehension of union.



‘SEARCHER-OUT OF WITCHCRAFT’

After the winnowing of phantasy, what remains? Living at Liskeard in a half-hidden cottage, which was once a barn and used as a meeting-house by John Wesley's followers when they were still a small persecuted sect, I found Bill Paynter. A native of Callington he has, for over thirty years, been collecting Cornish traditions in regard to folk-medicine and witchcraft. He was given the Bardic name of *Whyler Pystry* by the Gorsedd, meaning ‘Searcher-out of Witchcraft,’ in recognition of his work in this field; and he has frequently lectured and broadcast on these themes. I sought him out one week-end and looked through his most interesting material.

In every countryside there is a vast body of knowledge and phantasy which the city-bred mind dismisses as ‘superstition.’ This includes weather-lore, herb-lore, trade- or craft-traditions and any point where daily life impinges upon the supernormal. Indeed, the aim of ‘superstition’ is to achieve a working compromise with the unknown. Basic to most of it will be found the Doctrine of Signatures, which manifests itself most dramatically in sympathetic magic.

The horse-shoe as a talisman against ill-luck is almost universal; in Cornwall there are still many cottages and ‘town-places’ or farmsteads with its crescent nailed above the door. It is connected with horse-fetishism, and has morphological affinities with the waxing moon; but the Cornish explanation of its efficacy is that St. Dunstan, patron of blacksmiths, was asked by the Devil for a shoe that would never wear out. Old Sir Nick did not realise how painful the shoeing operation would be, and cried for mercy during it; but St. Dunstan only released him on condition that he left bearers of the horse-shoe unmolested.

The traditions of folk-medicine are only just dying out, and there are still old people suffering from shingles or ‘wildfire,’ rheumatism or thrush who prefer its ministrations to a ‘bottle

'SEARCHER-OUT OF WITCHCRAFT'

o' trade'—chemist's or doctor's medicine. An important branch of it is concerned with 'charming' and the man or woman gifted with this faculty is called a 'pellar.' In former times almost every village would have its pellar, but though charming is still practised it is becoming rare, and seems rarer than it is because both the pellar and his clients hesitate to admit their allegiance for fear of ridicule. To-day a charmer is nearly always elderly for the younger people, reared on 'popular science' have learned to despise those gifts once comprehended in the term 'mother-wit.' The Cornish are reticent about their secret heritage, partly from a half-conscious desire to hide it from the ravages of modernity; partly perhaps from a folk-memory of the epochs of persecution.

In the main, it seems to be skin complaints which respond best to charming, though such maladies as ague or 'crick in the back' are sometimes tackled. Eczema, ringworm or a scratch of the poisonous blackthorn twig are frequently cured by the arts of the pellar. With warts he can hardly fail, so many are the methods at his disposal: he can 'buy' them for a copper, and they thereafter disappear, or if they afflict the patient's hands, he can instruct him to 'wash' by moonlight in an empty metal basin—the moon's image—reciting meanwhile:

I wash my hands in this thy dish,
O Man in the Moon, grant my wish
And come and take away this.

Styes in the eye, called 'kennels,' 'wilks,' 'whitlows,' or 'qualyways,' can be banished by stroking the eye from the nose out with the tail of a black cat, saying with a stroke to each line:

I poke thee, I don't poke thee
I take the queff that's under 'ee
O qualyway, O qualyway!

Blood-staunching and the healing of boils, burns and scalds come within the pellar's province. The wording of the charms that remedy them varies somewhat in different localities; here

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is one against scalds collected by Mr. Paynter:

There were two angels came from the North,
One of them fire, the other frost.
In frost, out fire; in the name of the Father, Son
and Holy Ghost.

A similar charm for boils has three angels who came from the west.

There is a poetic quality about some of the blood-staunching charms; these must be accompanied by the sign of the cross made three times and are often followed by a triple Amen:

On our Lord's grave grew three flowers; one was Youth, the second was Virtue and the third was Truth. May the blood stop; in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, Amen.

Several, like the following, refer to a deflection of Jordan's waters:

Our Lord was born in Bethlehem,
Baptised in the river Jordan;
There he digged a well
And turned the water against the hill,
So shall thy blood stand still.

Mr. Paynter has seen a farm worker, who had gashed his wrist whilst sharpening a blade, quickly healed by the local 'pellar.' One advantage of calling on his skill is that he is, or was, more quickly available than orthodox medical aid.

The gift is either inherited, the charmer being the seventh child of a seventh child; or it is passed on by word of mouth, but it must be taught by a man to a woman or a woman to a man. The procedure is basically the same, whatever the complaint; the pellar makes passes over the lesion, addressing the patient by name and muttering the words of the charm so low that he cannot hear them. This is repeated, as are the passes, three or occasionally seven or nine times. If you go to visit a pellar—who usually seems to live in a rather isolated cottage up

a lane, simply show him the affected part but do not say what you want. The pellar never charges for his services, but will accept a present if a grateful patient likes to send one after the cure.

How and why does the charm work? for it works too often to be dismissed as nonsense. It operates partly by suggestion no doubt, though in saying this one has not explained much. But there is more to it than that; the pellar is sometimes consulted on behalf of a friend who does not know he is being charmed. Is it a branch of 'magnetic healing' or 'contact-healing'? Partly; yet 'absent-healing' is also practised; and the blood-stauncher, at least, often works on animals—even a slaughtered pig, according to one of Mr. Paynter's stories. A 'pellar' who had a grudge against a certain farmer murmured the charm while the pig's throat was being cut, and stopped the blood so successfully that the meat was spoiled.

Folk-medicine in Cornwall as elsewhere is indissolubly connected with witchcraft and constitutes a major part of the witch's stock-in-trade. The village 'wise woman' or 'cunning man' is the last repository of the traditional herb-lore handed down from Druidic times or even earlier. In the West Country the 'witch's stick,' a rod with a crook-end made of glass from Nailsea near Bristol, is the equivalent of the magician's 'wand of power.' Sometimes these rods were twisted, sometimes hollow and if so were filled with coloured threads or the tiny sweets called 'hundreds and thousands.' The stick was suspended above the chimney-piece so that if an ill-disposed member of the craft entered the house he or she would be obsessively compelled to count the contents of the glass tube, and so dissipate the energy intended for magicking. These sticks are called 'medicine-rods' since disease 'settled' upon them; but if carefully wiped each day they could be used as a cure-all.

The witch's province extended beyond the alleviation of illness; next to the demand for healing that for love-philtres was probably the greatest. To cast 'Dragon's blood,' a red powder made from the bark of an exotic tree, on a fire with the

appropriate incantation was the favourite remedy for a swain's fickleness. It still is, judging by the number of letters asking for it which Mr. Paynter receives. A 'cross saltire' made from two intertwined reeds was thrown into a well in order to divine the destiny of two lovers: if it swam, all would be well, but if it sank or disintegrated, they would part.

The 'witch's bottle' for holding the love potions was, in its present form, adapted about a hundred and twenty years ago from scent phials of Spanish design. The original patterns seem to have been perpetuated by painting them on ordinary bottles, the main *motif* being a white bird perched on a yellow fleur-de-llys, together with a red flower and a blue. Such a container was used by Tamson Blight, the Helston witch, for her philtres.

Whatever your problem, the witch would often send you away with a small black bag to be worn about you but on no account opened. If you did open it you might find bat's wings, bones, teeth and other oddments, but the spell would lose its efficacy. I was myself presented with a like small packet by a Turkish witch whom I consulted in Cyprus, but I have never opened it.

Most witchcraft is and has always been beneficent in intention and beneficial, or at least harmless, in result. It is the jealousy of more recent cults which gave it a bad name. However, since power of whatever nature may be misused, it has also a 'shadow side.' In Cornwall this usually manifested itself in the mommet, a figure carved or modelled in any material—sometimes even dough was used—to represent an enemy, and pierced with nails or pins in order to injure the unwilling 'sitter.' Mr. Paynter showed me one carved with fair skill in some black wood, with two nails driven into the heart and one into the left thigh. The agonised grin on the features was realistic, and the whole tiny image exhaled a malign force. These mommets were sometimes kept in a small coffin-shaped wooden box, so made as to be rather difficult to open; such boxes were in general use for containing material given one by a witch. To remove a spell to which the client felt he had been subjected, he was often told to roast the heart of a bullock or pig, stick it full of nails and hide

it in the chimney. A cognate practice forms part of the Mau-Mau ritual, as can be seen by those with a strong enough stomach to examine the appropriate section of Cecil Williamson's Museum of Magic and Witchcraft at Bourton-on-the-Water.

The greater part of Cornish witchcraft was of that shamanistic, down-to-earth, empirical kind which is found all over the world, largely because it may be worked by those who can neither read nor write. But side by side with this, and used in conjunction with it, a more sophisticated tradition may be traced, one with a more localised appeal simply because it required literacy in the operator. Unless he could distinguish one word-of-power from another, he might produce unwished-for results. It thus happens that among the impedimenta of some witches one comes across a few 'books.' In the collection of Mr. Paynter is a Quabalistic anthology entitled *The Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* which contains excerpts from various grimoires like *The Lesser Key*; and among some loose sheets of paper given him by witches I recognised a page copied from Barrett's *Magus*. Talismans and spells in the grimoire tradition were often employed—I saw the famous formula of Abracadabra written, leaving out a letter at each line, to form an inverted triangle on a heart-shaped piece of parchment, this to be worn constantly by the recipient. Many such scraps of ceremonial magic, smelling of incense and the midnight oil of the adept's study, have drifted down haphazard to the rustic sage, to be mingled with a maternal lore redolent of the hay-field and cow-byre.

My impression is that to-day there are more witchcraft survivals in the north and east of Cornwall than in other districts; but this may not be so, and certainly was not always so. Penwith had its share of celebrated practitioners, like Old Joan dwelling at Alsia Mill beside a well of virtue; and there was a well near Carn Kenijack haunted by the ghost of a witch. Madgy Figgy lived at several places in the Land's End district, including St. Levan, St. Buryan and Nanquidno, where she lodged in a cave by the shore. Her name calls up speculation, for it may be a generic term for any 'fey' character, witch, fairy

THE LIVING STONES

or even gypsy. A rhyme recorded by the late W. T. Martin of Redruth, tells how

Figgy Dowdy 'ad a will
Up 'pon top of Carn Marth 'ill;
He locken'd up by night and day
For fear they'd carr' the water 'way.

This refers to a fairies' well, used by children for the christening of their dolls. The Pin-well, or Pin Mill, formerly above Newlyn, where little girls would resort each Good Friday for the same purpose, was not a well but a stone basin. Into this each child would pour water and drop a bent pin, at the same time giving her new doll a name. When the Gwavas Estate was built the bowl was removed and now serves as a bird-bath in a neighbouring garden. Then there was poor Lizzie Figgy, who for years lived a wandering life off the country; but a bitter night last century overcame her. Already half-starved by the cruelty of the season, she was finally frozen to death under a hedge, hardy though she was and accustomed to sleeping out in all weathers. Even to-day a winter of unwonted snow and frost, like those of the last two years when drifts were many feet deep, is called a 'Lizzie Figgy winter.' She did not heed her country's weather-lore, like this rhyme from Penwith:

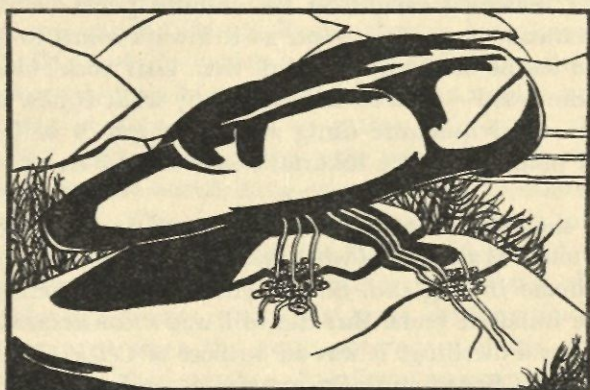
If the Lizard's clear
Rain is near,

nor watch the movement of the scales in a bunch of fir-cones hung up beside a stable-door; or, being destitute, could take no advantage of a blizzard warning.

Mr. Paynter does not think that any organised witch-covens remain, present practitioners of the art working a lone hand; but it is difficult to be sure of this, for folk-survivals tend to continue long after they seem to have died away. As regards healing at least, it is remarkable that while the traditions of the countryside die, a more sophisticated interest in all types of 'faith healing' or 'spiritual healing' appears in urban communi-

'SEARCHER-OUT OF WITCHCRAFT'

ties. He is conducting research on the basis of the letters he receives, many of them from town-dwellers, for whom he promises to request the pellar's aid, asking in return that the patient will let him know the result.



HILLS OF MICHAEL

This summer I began, newly taught, to seek out for myself those ancient centres of Michael-force which, re-allumined, may glow again for the future. The tide was out, so I was able to walk across the expanse of sand between Marazion and the Mount by the causeway, still slippery from its last covering of water, shells and seaweeds caught in the minute pools between its stones. Marazion was windswept, as it always seems to be; but under the lee of the conical island, that 'hoar rock' which was once 'in the wood'—a forest submerged by what is now Gwavas Lake—an air of quietude hung about the groves of ilex and sycamore, palpable as the luxuriant lichens that clung to their trunks.

It was summer, so a crowd of sightseers was waiting to be shown as much as allowed of what must be the most romantically-situated home in England. St. Aubyns have lived here for the past three hundred years. But the hill was a consecrated centre before it was a dwelling; it was an outpost of Celtic Christianity before it was a Benedictine Priory, and a conducted tour is not the best opportunity for appreciating its atmosphere.

However, the Michael-force is sometimes strong enough to overcome such disadvantages, and on this occasion the peaceful air closed in again after each sally of the raucous boatmen guides.

Humour to me is one of life's hardships; danger and privation can be borne if they must but humour, which, in its worst form tends to appear with them, can render them almost intolerable. To the sensitive, it must be one of the chief tortures of Service life, increasing that characteristic boredom rather than easing it. Humour is, fundamentally, an appeal for sympathy, and if it were frankly that, it could be met; but it has to pretend to give you something, instead of admitting that it is asking something from you. I tried to hear the facts without listening to the jokes

HILLS OF MICHAEL

during the pauses in our climb for the guide's speech, but others among the crowd tittered dutifully from time to time. I must be the kind of audience against whom comedians provide themselves with a lucky charm before a performance.

One of the uppermost loops of the cobbled track passes over the Giant's Well—traditions of Cormoran still linger on the Mount which he is said to have built. He could carry a bullock under one arm and two sheep under the other; and his wife, equally stalwart, would bring him stones from the mainland in her apron. One day the string broke, letting fall by the shore what is now called 'Chapel Rock, though long bereft of the shrine to Our Lady for which it once provided foundations. The fact that people from Marazion and Ludgvan used to resort to it at low tide on Good Friday to gather 'trig'-meat, as winkles were called, suggests that Venus once reigned here as Queen of Heaven, as she did beside those other great rocks where she rose from the waves. The giantess was evidently related to the Hag Beara of Slieve-na-Caillighe in the County Meath, of whom an identical story is told. Folk-lore may have exaggerated the stature of the Mount's titanic pair; but some confirmation of their legend appeared when the south-east corner of the church was excavated about the year 1720. A skeleton seven feet eight inches tall was found walled up in a cellar, together with a leather water-jug, still as good as new; though some say the bones were those of Sir John Arundell, killed here during the Wars of the Roses.

A stone ornament known as 'the Giant's Egg-cup' was pointed out to us when we reached the rough terrace outside the castle-buildings, as marking the place where, lower down the south-western cliff, a granite slab juts out, invisible from above. Here in the year 710, though some chroniclers put it earlier, in 495, a glowing apparition of the Archangel dazzled some fishermen in a boat below. This is but one of a series of Michael-manifestations, for the presence of the great being is recorded at intervals throughout Europe and the Middle East. There is only one day in the year when the public, allowed to roam unescorted over

the Mount, may approach this craggy platform, but it can be clearly seen in profile from the distance of the mainland. Otherwise, for a nearer view, a boat like the fishermen's would be needed. This is the true *Cader Myghal*, for that popularly called 'St. Michael's Chair' is only an old lantern-turret surmounting the tower.

We entered the castle through an iron portcullis and crossed diagonally the two drawing-rooms, now painted dove-blue and white, which once formed the Lady-chapel. Beyond these we came out from the castle terrace to the north facing the mainland, where the head of a four-sided lantern-cross now stands. Southward, one can gaze out to sea or down upon steeply-terraced gardens, supported by a wall which separates them from the bracken croft land above the shore. Lower, a rocky fringe meets another fringe of foam. Among the flowering shrubs are set two old crosses which in their evocative power make the lantern-cross above seem merely sophisticated; the one to the east is small, but further west is a taller one with the cross-form incised doubly on one face, the shaft as well as the head being carved.

Turning one's eyes from the Mount's precipitous sides to look out across water towards the shadowed heights of the Penwith peninsula, one notices a series of hill-crowning silhouettes. First, the triangle of Knill's Steeple rises to the right of Trencrom—another sacred hill—above unseen St. Ives. Next, the squat outline of Castle-an-Dinas, scene of the St. John's Eve bonfire, can be picked out above Penzance; and finally the eye is drawn to the gaunt engine-house of Ding Dong, isolated on the highest point of the moorland midway between Zennor, Morvah and Madron. This is reputedly the oldest tin mine in the country, though some say that Green Burrows nearby is older yet.

The church of the Mount marks the site of what has been a Michael-sanctuary since early in the eighth century at least, and who knows whether the earlier 'Druid' temple was not dedicated to the same force? The church was constituted a 'cell' of Brittany's Mont St. Michel by Edward the Confessor; if the

HILLS OF MICHAEL

eighth century date for the apparition is the correct one, it is almost contemporaneous with that recorded at the Breton mount in St. Aubert's time. Yet, as often in the dedication of churches, one finds here a confusion or rather perhaps a confluence of symbolism, the main *motif*—sculpture, painting or window—depicting an image other than that of the nominal dedication. It is not Michael but John the Baptist who dominates the altar with a head-bearing dish finely carved in English alabaster. Michael is only represented by his counterpart, in a small brass figure on the candelabra, of that more mundane dragon-slayer, St. George. The Baptist seems to have migrated here from the mainland, for his severed head adorns the arms of Penzance Borough in punning allusion to the town's name—'holy head-land' being taken as 'holy head.' No doubt the real *pen sans* is that small promontory which to-day divides the harbour from the bathing-pool and is still dominated by the parish church. In a small curving road between the churchyard and the sea, the head is crudely carved on the outer wall of a workshop and is still kept garishly painted—one of those decapitated demi-gods who, it is always hoped, will give utterance to an oracle. One day I inquired about it from the men at work there, and they told me that the building had once been a chapel; it is possible that this, rather than the modern church above—though this too has its carving of the Head—marks the site of the Celtic hermitage which gave the place its name for sanctity.

There is a morphologic connection between the three hill-top shrines—*islands or almost islands*—which constitute the main triangle of Michael-force for this region—Mont St. Michel, St. Michael's Mount and Glastonbury Tor where the Archangel shares a dedication with Joseph of Arimathea who is supposed also to have visited the Mount. There are many lesser centres such as Looe Island, a pre-Conquest priory of Glastonbury, and Hamdon Hill near Montacute which divides with Glastonbury a tradition of St. Joseph's burial. On the Tor the Archangels of the Quarters even now appear to visionary sight—golden, grey, rose-coloured and blue—guarding the four faces

of the tower, which was built of stones from the Druidic sanctuary at Stonedown nearby. A worn sculptured panel on the western face shows a scene described in guide books as 'the devil weighing a soul'; but it is Michael himself in his Rhadamanthus aspect, offering one of the 'souls of the just.' In the valley below, a window of St. John's church represents him as he is often shown, a figure of justice holding balance and scales; and it is thus that he appears carved in the reredos of Perranuthnoe Church, eastward along the coast from Marazion.

This year on Michaelmas Day I climbed another hill of Michael—that, indeed, of the ultimate of his thirty-two dedications in Cornwall. I noticed the menhir at Tregonebris called 'the Blind Fidler' which marks the turning to Sancreed, before I descended at Crows-an-wra, where the road forked toward Chapel Carn Brea. *Wra* may mean either 'witch' or 'wayside,' and *crows* can be a cross as well as a cross-road; the place thus dedicated to Hecate Trivia now shares a well-mown lawn with the Methodist Chapel and what must be the loveliest milestone in Cornwall. This is triangular in section, but only two faces are inscribed with directions, one pointing to St. Just, the other to Land's End. The old stone cross was moved to its present position some fifty-five years ago.

The way rose steeply towards the staring white farm-house of Boslinkan, perched on the hill-side, and I had already begun to salute the guardian of the hill when I was offered a lift by a man who thought I was walking to St. Just Airport! I explained that I was only going on to the downs and soon had left the road for a downland track. I climbed slowly for though the sun was shining the west-nor'-west wind was so strong that I found difficulty in breathing.

The summit was littered with dismal reminders of the war, when a Radar station had been established here—first a double concrete hutment, one section still marked 'dining-room'; then a structure resembling a public convenience which had been no doubt in use as such, even since abandoned by the military. Further on lay some circular constructions, much dismantled,

HILLS OF MICHAEL

whose function I could not guess, and the broken foundations of several other buildings. Who is responsible for allowing such eyesores to deface the countryside or worse, as in this case, to profane a sanctuary: The War Office? The Office of Works? Whoever the appropriate authority may be, it should not merely let them fall into decay, but should either maintain them—if they could still be useful—or else remove them completely. The latter alternative is preferable from every point of view, since nothing out-dates so quickly as war-equipment and these remains of it, in common with most of their like, are already too derelict to be worth repairing.

Disused defences collect about them a miasma-like aura which infects them almost physically; this happens to no other buildings in the same degree. Whether this emanation is due to the residues of hatred, fear, boredom and sex-frustration left by the servicemen who have been stationed in them I do not know; but they constitute a centre of astral pestilence. For this reason alone they should be destroyed but since a plea for their liquidation based on such grounds would be disregarded, one can only point out their deleterious effect on amenity, which is serious enough. Chapel Carn Brea is by no means the only place to be similarly desecrated; some particularly noxious specimens mutilate the headland above the lighthouse at St. Anthony-in-Roseland; and Rame Head further east has also been marred; and the Channel Islands abound with other instances, like the claustrophobic underground hospital in Guernsey, where surely no one could ever have been cured, and the *Creux des Fées*, half of which was made into a defensive position and has not subsequently been restored.

Turning from the unsavoury debris about me, the needless aftermath of strife, I tried to find the two tumuli indicated on the summit by my map. Scientific warfare had not spared these either; the interior of one had been converted to its purposes with now-rusty iron, and the retaining wall much damaged. The other tumulus was difficult to trace at all but must, I think, have backed upon the small granite carn at the southern end of the

hilltop; and I felt drawn to this as the chief remaining vortex of the Michael-force on this much-impaired centre. Here perhaps was the site of that Chapel of St. Michael de Bree, which was granted in 1396 by the Mount's prior to the hermit Ralph de Bolouhal. He kept a light burning in it for the guidance of travellers and fishermen by night; while during the hours of light its whitewashed walls would serve, like those of many coastal shrines, as a day-mark.

Leaning against the massive boulders or reclining in the shelter they afforded from a wind which otherwise would have made me cough, I mused for an hour, enveloped in air, space, and sunlight. Since the South is Michael's quarter, his influence in this nook must be especially strong—and I remembered the 'Servant of Michael' and her fellow-pilgrims working that day at Tintern. Her dedicated journeys through the length of Cornwall have aroused its dormant hallows—the circulation of its elemental Water by her well quest, the kindling of its Fire by her devotion to the Michael-shrines. I looked East and saw the Mount backed by a phantasmal promontory which on a clearer day would have been recognisable as the Lizard; South, and the Wolf Lighthouse showed as a grey column on the shimmering water. I turned West, and below me stretched the green levels of the airport, its buildings fragile as toys; North, and the jagged peak of Carn Kenidjack overtopping russet moorland was echoed, it seemed, in the nearer cone of Leswidden, the only china-clay dump in West Penwith.

To my right, the wind was dashing the sea against the whole cliff-bound coast northward from the Land's End; its continuous crashing was plainly to be heard from the western side of the hill, though in the eastern hollow all was quiet. Over the bare prospect a mist seemed to be spread, as though a veil of sea-spume was blown across the land. Foam was casting itself over the Longships' rocky islets, and up the sides of the Brissons off Cape Cornwall. I looked in vain to the south-west for a glimpse of the Scillies, but to-day they were invisible.

I caught an occasional brief glitter from the windscreen of a

HILLS OF MICHAEL

car on one of the roads below, a flash from the 'star called wormwood.' A character in *The Brothers Karamazov* identified this enigmatic luminary from the *Book of the Revelation* with the tentacles, spreading even in his time, of railways over the face of Holy Russia. But in present day England it is not the railways so much as the roads which ray out lethal noise, fume, and 'hideous ruin and combustion'—material counterpart of the greed, ambition and love of power by which they are produced. Every industrial concentration is the centre of such a poisonous star, and the once-sacred elevations are barely spared. Glastonbury is made insupportable by the main road between Bridgwater and Shepton Mallet; nothing so bad as yet despoils Chapel Carn Brea and it was with reluctance that I prepared to leave its peaceful height.

The map marked a path crossing the hill to descend towards the St. Just road; but the track I had followed led only as far as the carn, and I could find no trace of it on the southern face of the down. I could see at the base a lane that had once led towards a farm, but as it seemed choked with furze-bushes, like many another, I wandered back the way I had come. Going up to a squarish outcrop of granite, I found a natural stoup in its upper surface and dipped my hand in the water there with a farewell salute to the archangelic guardian. I had been alone during the whole of my visit and so was able to concentrate on the being of the hill and absorb some of its peace and exaltation. But on my return I saw a single green-clad figure, Wordsworthian in her solitude, though followed by two small fulvous creatures, dogs perhaps, moving away down the grassy track across Tredinney Common.

From Crows-on-Wra I retraced the few hundred yards of the road to that other wayside cross which marks the turning to St. Buryan. This is a smaller cross but is raised on a succession of plinths and, like that where the St. Buryan road forks to St. Loy, supports a doll-like figure with outstretched arms carved in low relief on the northern face, the southern face being simply incised with the geometric symbol. Away over the rough

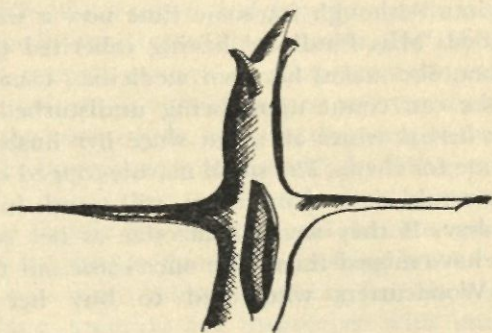
fields and moors to my left lurked the circle of Boscawen-ûn; I had no time to seek it out, but went over to look at a huge lump of granite cleft in two where perhaps some rude stone monument had been thrown down. A little way outside St. Buryan I was drawn down the side lane leading to Trevorgans by the sight of a menhir in a field, perhaps connected with Boscawen-ûn as are 'the Pipers' with Nûn-Cerag, though it is much further away. As I walked round it, touching it with my hand, an association natural enough, of phallicism with virgin blood rose to my mind.

At St. Buryan I was hoping to find Miss Mitchell in her shop with her shoulder-length white hair and Cornish endearments—'Yes, my handsome,' 'Tis so, my lover'—but her nephew—'my boy'—was serving instead. While he was still abroad during the war I remember seeing on a shelf in her back-parlour a wooden bunch of bananas carved and painted in simplified style which he had sent her from India. I was so much taken with it that I offered to buy it, but she would not sell. He asked if I had come from Porthcurno and I told him where I had been; but he knew nothing of the ancient chapel on the down and thought the name must be connected with the disused Quakers' graveyard on the way to Sennen.

It seemed that my way home was marked out by ancient stones: the area around St. Buryan church was one of the four Sanctuaries of Cornwall and some of the many crosses still mark its boundaries, though others have been displaced. Two more crosses face the weather in the village which stands high and seems to get all the wind, rain and fog that hits the peninsula. The carving of the one at the cross-roads is much worn; the other, in the churchyard, is more elaborately sculptured and better preserved. Both stand on large plinths or almost-pyramids of granite, weeds and grasses taking hold in the chinks; and both are of the 'sun-wheel' type. Another, by the wayside beyond the village, is in the form of a Greek cross; further on, you pass the one at the St. Loy turning, and lastly, a humble wheel-cross hides in the grass beyond the circle of Nûn-Cerag, between the

HILLS OF MICHAEL

holed stone and the famous 'Pipers.' Here was a mingling without discrepancy, as once in the now-shattered ambience of Glastonbury and still (I have heard) in Iona, of Pagan and Christian *numina*; a genuine synthesis has been achieved. Since Michael himself is pre-Christian, the making of this amalgam is perhaps an effect of the archangelic presence.



LAST AND FIRST

Though Lamorna has not escaped the neurotic bustling that has convulsed almost the whole of teeming Britain since the end of the war, it is still possible to catch by the tail that vanishing seclusion, that leisured tempo which reigned here before the age of the speed-record set in.

It is still possible to gather on the common by Lamorna Turn the elderberry flowers which, dried and later infused, will soothe the inflammation of winter colds. I have picked up a little herb-lore when visiting Mrs. Tregear of Findlow's Botanic Stores by Penzance station. Although for some time now a widow, she is still often called 'Miss Findlow,' having inherited the business from her father. She makes her own medicines, usually on Sundays, when she can count upon being undisturbed. Once she specialised in herbal wines also, but since her husband's death has not the time for them. The small marble-topped table, where her customers would sit to drink them, still stands in a recess by her shop-window. If they were as effective as her cough-syrup, I am sorry to have missed them. She once came out to Lamorna to see the Woodcutters who used to buy her dandelion tea.

During the winter months, if you are out early enough in the morning, you may still meet at the Turn with Albert Mellor. His ear-rings, grey whiskers and pedlar's pack have been well known in these parts for upwards of thirty years. He works a different locality each day; a bus carries him some of the way and he walks the rest, offering his patrons in farm and hamlet an assortment of trinkets, haberdashery and grease-proof paper. I am always delighted to see him; months have elapsed since the last meeting, but it is as though I had spoken to him only the day before. He is always cheerful; he does not seem to mind if you do not buy anything, but enjoys a talk. He can neither read nor write but his conversation is none the worse for that;

he never gossips spitefully, and there is even a kind of delicacy in what he says.

The other day I invited him in to breakfast and he told me about the two barrel-organs which he plays in Penzance on days when the town is crowded. He takes up a pitch on the terrace in Market Jew Street for a few days before Christmas, or near the fair-ground at Corpus Christi. Sometimes he plays at St. Ives, or even further afield. He lives in Penzance with his daughter—'the maid,' as he still calls her, though she is a married woman with a child; but when 'his feet begin to itch' he must be off travelling the roads, hitch-hiking perhaps, with one of his barrel organs or his wooden pack. He goes where intuition suggests—Wales, Scotland, Ireland; he is so hardy that he is not worried if no one offers him a night's lodging, though he is often allowed to doss down in an out-building at least. He takes a tent with him, and is content enough to sleep in the open if need be, knowing how to make a fire however wet the weather.

He likes the countryside, he likes the sense of freedom; in the fine season he sometimes takes casual jobs lifting potatoes or the like.

Due to the Middle Eastern crisis and the consequent restriction of petrol, it is possible that the vanishing horse may reappear; it is some years since Samson Hosking led his huge grey mare down the lane, quieting her turbulence with muttered words. But Clements still rides his horse bareback when changing its pasture from one part of his holding to another, or taking it farmward for harnessing to harrow or cart. In winter, riders for pleasure too clatter past, men exercising their cobs or following a hunt, and children on ponies with flowing tails.

Joe Pollard comes round twice a week with his pony and cart laden with greengrocery. I catch the sound of hoofs a quarter of a mile away as I am finishing breakfast, the early sun slanting through the corner-windows. Sometimes I open the half-door and glance from the glisten of dew on leaves to its twig-suspended drops as I wait for the cart to round the corner of the road. Then Joe tethers his pony to the ivy-grown bank opposite my

gate and asks what I want. I willingly tell him, not only for the convenience of having fruit and vegetables delivered but for Joe's gnome-like appearance, and his pony. Occasionally I have to remonstrate with him:

'Do you know, I couldn't eat those turnips I had last week, they were so hard!'

'Yes, they was terrible, wasn't they!' he exclaims blithely, a fey smile lighting up his grey-green eyes; and I am completely disarmed.

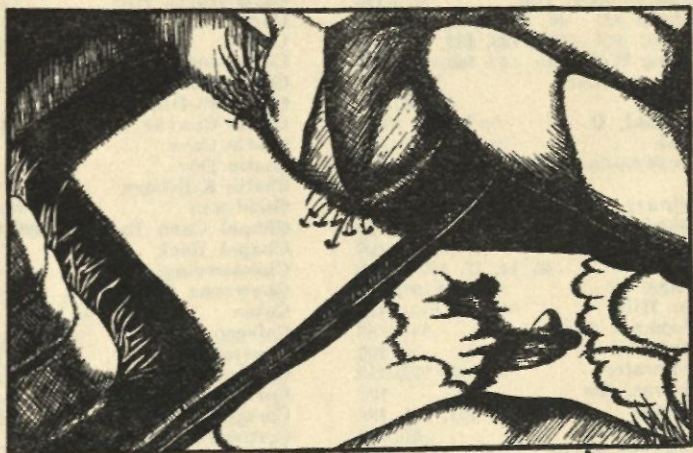
Though 'Vow Cave' may even be tolerable next summer if there are few enough motor-vehicles on the road—a respite, at least, from the mad rush of industrialism—a new horror has lately overtaken the valley. This is the denuding of those woodlands which are Lamorna's chief glory and the feature which makes it almost unique in the district. Since it was known that the land remaining to Boskenna estate was to be put up for auction, marauders have come with saws and raided the copse-land for firewood. Once they confined themselves to gathering fallen branches or lopping the rotten wood; but for some time past there has been a surreptitious pilfering from sound trees also, large and small. This has now become a barefaced pillage: boughs are hacked or torn off haphazard and whole trees are cut down. It is not forestry for, needless to say, none are planted in replacement; it is plunder, all the more devastating since this part of Cornwall is already almost bare of trees. In the absence of their owners' protest, it seems that little can be done to protect them; but it will be a disaster if Lamorna shares the fate of all-too-many other Cornish woodlands, which have vanished, literally in smoke, up the chimneys of local grates and stoves.

The forces which ravage the valley to-day are incomparably more harmful than the obscure boggy or two which may remain, in a bewitched cranny here and there, from long past ages. Yet there is that which resists the encroachments of man—I think of the quarries started hopefully on both east and west sides of the Cove. What are they now? Abandoned; a tarnless chasm,

LAST AND FIRST

a tumble of boulders overgrown with bramble and ivy. Yet the one below Kemyel certainly held promise of prosperity, its granite unveined by too much quartz, for the stones of the Admiralty Pier at Dover were quarried from it, and those for part of the Thames Embankment. Something happened—who knows what?—to silence the blasting, to turn aside the hammering and hauling; and when all had fallen into disuse, primeval peace again enfolded the Cove and vegetation began to cover the scars, so that now the quarries have sunk into the landscape. So vanish all who would profane Lamorna's precincts!

What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left,
O let them be left, wildness and wet;
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.



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